Legendary Composer of
Jana Gana Mana...

CAPTAIN
RAM SINGH THAKUR

Rajendra Rajan

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Born on 15th August 1953 at Balh village near Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh Rajendra Rajan is an eminent, prolific and well read Hindi writer. He has carved out a niche for himself as a renowned short story writer.

He has authored more than 22 books during his journey of four decades as a creative writer including 6 short story collections, 5 novels and many other books of memoirs, history, cinema etc. He is also Editor of one of the leading literary Hindi journals *Iravati.*

In 2007, Rajan was conferred with the highest State Award of Himachal Government, 'Pandit Chandra Dhar Sharma Guleri Award' for Literature for his short story collection *Band Darwaze.* In 2024 the author had also received 'Himachal Excellence Award' as best Short Story Writer by Divya Himachal Media House Dharamshala.

Rajendra Rajan

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Captain Ram Singh Thakur

by

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Dedicated to

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose

Performing National Anthem at All India Radio, New Delhi

Captain Ram Singh Thakur

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PART I

Journey of National Anthem

Foreword

National Anthem is the most heard by anyone during one's lifetime. It is also true that a vast majority may have a fair idea of its creator but very few people are aware of the person behind the rhythm and tune of this song. Captain Ram Singh, the composer of National Anthem tune has composed a number of other rhythmic songs, which are inseparable from any march past or National functions. The life story of this remarkable individual is beyond any fantasy and a parallel saga of our freedom struggle about which very little is known. In reality his story is a soothing and reassuring tale of leaders roles during freedom struggle, which of late are being altered to suit the present times! The subjugation and traumas became his armour around the umbilical cord binding him to his mother land. Even the insidious attempts of linking his features with those of his captors failed to move him away even an inch from his motherland. He is one Hero, with whom every common Indian can identify, his biography makes everyone, the Proud Indian, which all of us aspire to be!

Shimla
2nd October 2025

Dr. Arun Kumar

Acknowledgments

I was fortunate to have met Captain Ram Singh in Dharamshala in the year 1999. I had a fair idea about his contributions but when I went ahead with a book on his life, I realised, what a legend he was and how less anyone in our country knows about him!

A major unravelling about his extraordinary life, has been possible from the archives of Nehru Museum and library, my foremost thanks are due to the Museum authorities, which made the subsequent happenings possible.

Sh. Ramesh Thakur, the blessed son of the multifaceted, unsung hero, had been associated with this monumental task from the beginning. He had made available some vital and rare documents along with some photographs. This helped me in bringing out the story of a rare freedom fighter, who as the Music Director of Indian National Army had composed numerous tunes which more than anything else makes an ordinary Indian a dedicated soldier ready to make any sacrifice for the Nation!

I am indebted to Sh. Maheshwar Dutt Sharma, Editor of Bharatiya Jnanpith, who was instrumental in publishing the Hindi version of Captain Ram Singh's life story five years back. Sh. Prem Pradhan, the celebrated Nepali author, ensured the translation into Nepali language and in turn the Hero, Captain Ram Singh returned to his adoring fraternity, although Captain Singh is a Hero for every Indian!

The Hindi version of the book had been launched by the then Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Sh Jai Ram Thakur in the year 2021. Sh. Prem Singh Tamang, Chief Minister of Sikkim, had graciously released this book in Namchi on the Independence Day of the year 2022.

I don't have any words to repay the affection and forthcomingness of various social activists at Darjeeling, Kalimgpong, Kurseong and many other places towards my team, once a reference had been made about the great man. People, told stories from their hearts and were curious to know from us also! I must make a special reference about Sh. Ravinder Rana, the President of Himachal and Punjab Gorkha Association, Dharamsala for his ever willingness to help me in any way to complete this task. Thank you all.

Once the Hindi Edition, was out, my interactive sessions with Doordarshan Kendras at Delhi, Shimla and Jalandhar as well as on the All India Radio, Shimla, Hamirpur and Jalandhar, not only propagated the contents, it also helped me in explaining some of the narratives in the English Edition. My sincere gratitude to all.

The Hindi translation of the interview of Captain Ram Singh, obtained from the Nehru Museum, archives had been done into English by Smt. Promila Arora, the poetess and social activist from Jalandhar. I am beholden to her. Sequencing and arranging of the first few chapters is by Sh. S N Joshi, I am obliged to him.

Finally, the manuscript has been chiseled and at places rewritten for ensuring the original flavour, the foreword being more than a formality by my long term friend, Dr. Arun Kumar.

May the book makes aware every one about the one and only one —Captain Ram Singh!

Formation of Indian National Army

Shubham Sharma

The World War in 1939 paved the way for the independence of the South-East Asian countries which were colonised by the brutal European powers. Roger Casement, an Irish Revolutionary whom Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose often quoted in his speeches, said "Self-government is our right. A thing born in us at birth; a thing no more to be doled out to us or withheld from us by another people than the right to life itself - than the right to feel the sun or smell the flowers, or to love our kind. . . where men must beg with bated breath for leave to subsist in their own land, to think their own thoughts, to sing their own songs, to garner the fruits of their own labours. . . then surely it is braver, a saner and a truer thing, to be a rebel... than tamely to accept it as the natural lot of men"

World Wars change the World Order. World War II was seen by Indian revolutionaries as an opportunity to gain the freedom. The story of the formation of Indian National Army has its roots arising from the Ghadar Movement. Indian Revolutionaries settled outside the Indian Sub-continent like Rash Behari Bose, Swami Satyanand Puri, Baba Amar Singh, Granthi Pritam Singh Dhillon, Debnath Das etc were in touch with Japanese Intelligence Agencies. War is a business that costs human lives to achieve objectives. To support any war, the participating dispensation needs money and fuel apart from human lives. After the incident of Pearl Harbour, World War II expanded.

The allied colonies like Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Borneo, French, Indo-China etc were rich in rubber and tea plantations, from oil reserves. So, it was decided to invade South East Asia by the Japanese Armed Forces. In order to consolidate over these colonies, Japanese wanted to capture Burma and give British Empire a final blow, the Japanese wanted to march into India. To achieve their mission, Japan needed more troops willing to fight against the British. That's how the Japanese agreed to support the cause of Indian independence.

Indian Independence League

It was a political organisation formed in 1920s by Rash Behari Bose which advocated independence of India and organised the Indian diaspora. Rash Behari Bose was one of the earliest Indian revolutionaries to escape British surveillance after his role in the Delhi Conspiracy Case (1912) and the Ghadar Movement (1915). Many Ghadarites who escaped from the arrest, joined IIL.

Ras Behari Bose escaped from India in June 1915 and took refuge in Japan. In Japan, Rash Behari Bose had found strong allies among influential Japanese nationalists and Pan-Asian leaders. He was sheltered by Mitsuru Tōyama, the head of the Genyosha (Black Ocean Society) and later associated with the Kokuryūkai (Black Dragon Society), which actively promoted Asian solidarity against western imperialism. Through Tōyama and other sympathisers, Bose established contact with Japanese political circles and intelligence agencies.

While in Japan, he gradually mixed up and settled into Japanese society. He married Toshiko Soma, the daughter of Aizo and Kokkō Soma, who were well-known for their Pan-Asianist sympathies and support for Asian revolutionaries. This marriage not only secured his permanent stay in Japan but also deepened his integration into Japanese cultural and political life. In due course, he was granted Japanese citizenship.

Japan – Thailand Military Ties in 1940

The year 1940 marked a turning point in the relationship between Japan and Thailand, as the political and military currents of the Second World War transformed South-east Asia. What began as cautious co-operation soon developed into a strategic partnership, eventually paving the way for a formal alliance.

Thailand's Political Shift:

Thailand in 1932 was transformed from Monarchy to Constitutional Monarchy during the period of Chakri King Prajadhipok (also known as Rama VII). On 5th June 1939, Siam was officially renamed Thailand under the leadership of Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram (Phibun). His government embraced authoritarian nationalism. Thailand sought to restore territories in Laos and Cambodia that had been ceded earlier to the colonial powers.

Japan, at the same time, was expanding its empire across East Asia. Having already established dominance over Manchuria and large parts of China, Japan began to look southwards. South-east Asia, with its rich natural resources of rice, rubber, oil, and tin, became a crucial strategic target.

The Franco-Thai War and Japanese Mediation

After the fall of France to Germany in 1940, the Thai Government launched military operations against Vichy French Indochina [Franco–Thai War, lasting from October 1940 – May 1941], seeking an opportunity to reclaim its lost territories. In September 1940, Japan occupied Northern French Indochina with Vichy France's reluctant consent. This suddenly brought Japan to Thailand's doorstep. Phibun's government saw in Japan both a counterweight to British and French dominance and a potential pathway to Thailand's territorial ambitions.

Japanese troops and military envoys established contact with Bangkok, offering arms, training, and strategic partnership. Col. Hiroshi Tamura of the Japanese Army was posted as Military Attache in Bangkok. Japan acted as mediator, but its role was far from neutral. Japan wanted to expand its presence in Indochina while securing Thai goodwill. In early 1941, Japan forced Vichy France to accept Thai demands, handing over parts of Cambodia and Laos to Bangkok. For the Thai leadership, Japan had proven itself as a friend who could deliver victory against a European colonial power.

Japanese Occupation of Indochina

Japanese delegations frequently visited Bangkok, initiating discussions on the supply of arms and the possibility of co-ordinated strategies. Thailand, meanwhile, maintained an official stance of neutrality in the early years of World War II. This position changed dramatically on 8 December 1941, when Japanese forces launched a brief invasion on Thailand. The conflict lasted only a few hours. Field Marshal Phalek Phibun announced ceasefire after the five hours of the conflict. On 21st Dec 1941 Thailand officially concluded a military alliance with Japan, allowing its territory to be used by Japan as a base for launching operations in British Malaya region and Burma. Recognising the situation and hoping to benefit territorially, Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram's government chose to co-operate. Japan assured Thailand support in regaining territories in Indochina—covering parts of present-day Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

As Allied bombing raids intensified over Bangkok due to its alliance with Japan, Thailand went further by declaring war on Britain and the United States. With Japanese backing, it annexed territories in neighbouring regions, expanding north, south, and east, and for a brief period, even shared a border with China near Kengtung.

Indo Japanese Relations with Rash Behari Bose and Baba Amar Singh

The Imperial Japanese Army maintained good relations with Indian diaspora, particularly with the members of Indian Independence League. I would like to quote an incident described by Lt Gen Iwaichi Fujiwara (then Major) in his book. Fujiwara Kikan that in December 1940, the 21st Japanese Army in Canton reported that three Sikhs had escaped from a Hong Kong jail, where they were imprisoned for anti-British activities arrived their headquarters and sought Japanese help to reach Bangkok or French Indochina to continue their struggle for India's independence.

The IIL activists were in close association with Swami Satyanand Puri, founder of Thai Bharat Cultural Lodge and Indian National Council in Bangkok. Debnath Das was General Secretary of the Indian National Council who was in touch with German Military officials and Indians living in Japan. On 16th September 1941, the Chief of the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff, Gen Hajime Sugiyama(just on the 14th Day of his appointment as the Chief of the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff) ordered Major Iwaichi Fujiwara (assisted by some young graduate officers of Japanese Army's *Nakano School - Institutionfor Military Intelligence Training)*to assist intelligence operations, particularly with respect to the I.I.L. and Malaya and Chinese anti-British groups.

Invasion on South-East Asia by Japan

The Japanese Southern Expeditionary Army Group was formed on November 6, 1941, under the command of General (later promoted to Field Marshal in 1943) Terauchi Hisaichi, with orders to attack and occupy Allied territories in South-East Asia. The Japanese Army launched operations under various code names after.

The invasion of Thailand on 8 December 1941 had no separate code name, but it was crucial for allowing the 15th Army under General Shōjirō Iida to use Thai territory as a staging ground for future operations into Burma and Malaya. Likewise, the assault on Hong Kong, carried out by the 38th Japanese Division, was part of the Southern Operation but without a code name, aimed at eliminating the British foothold on the China coast.

Following the Japanese forces successful invasion, Lieutenant General Sosaku Suzuki, Chief of Staff of the 25th Japanese Army, instructed Major Iwaichi Fujiwara to send his agents to the Japanese field armies. Their mission was to take charge of Indian prisoners of war and extend support to the activities of the Indian Independence League.

Fujiwara called Granthi Pritam Singh Dhillon and both decided to dispatch their agents to co-ordinate with 5th Japanese Division. Both Granthi Pritam Singh Dhillon and Fujiwara left for Thai Malaya Border to contact 5th Japanese

Division. Fujiwara also made arrangements to open an office of I.I.L. immediately in Hat Yai (Thailand) near Thai Malaya Border for organising a meeting with Indians living in the region.

On arriving Hat Yai, Pritam Singh Dhillon hoisted Indian Tricolour Flag which he had brought from Bangkok. He dispatched I.I.L. agents to the Ando Detachment and Military units deployed in the Kota Bharu district of Malaysia. Thereafter, Pritam Singh also addressed Indian Diaspora in Sadao.

Mohan Singh & Fall of Singapore

On 13th December 1941, Pritam Singh and Major Fujiwara headed towards Alor Setar. 1/14 Punjab Regiment, one of the most elite units of the British Indian Army under the command of Lt. Col. Flitzpatrick was deployed in Jitra, which was in the middle of Thai Malaya Border and just 23 kms away from Alor Setar. The Japanese Airforce raided the British Indian Army in the region. Captain Mohan Singh was located in Jitra during the Japanese Air strikes.

The Japanese had established a complete supremacy. Mohan Singh made up his mind to get in touch with the Japanese Army and he marched towards Kuala Nerang on 14th Dec 1941 from Jitra after facing the debacle. Further, the Japanese also dropped leflets asking Indians to Fujiwara and Mohan Singh became good friends. Fujiwara and Granthi Pritam Singh Dhillon told Mohan Singh about their intentions to raise an Army of the Indian troops to fight against British and liberate India. Mohan Singh agreed to become the part of the noble cause. Then Fujiwara left for the Headquarters of the 25th Japanese Army located in the suburbs of Alor Setar. Fujiwara was able to establish the contact with 5th Japanese Division through an interpreter

Lt. Kunizuka. Thereafter, another group of Indian POWs captured by 5th Japanese Division joined Mohan Singh.

On 20th December 1941, Capt. Mohan Singh along with Fujiwara met Lt Gen Yamashita. After the fall of Singapore on 15th Feb 1942, Gen Percival who was the GOC of the Malayan Command of the British Indian Army surrendered to the Japanese. The Indian troops were segregated from British and Australian troops and they were handed over formally by Lt Colonel Hunt (Staff officer of the Malayan Command of the British Indian Army) to Major Iwaichi Fujiwara at Farrer Park in Singapore on 17th February 1942.

Fujiwara addressed Indian Troops and motivated them join Indian National Army under Capt. Mohan Singh to liberate their mother land. Japanese won't treat Indians as POWs but as their friends. Then Mohan Singh made a fiery speech, appealing Indians to fight for India's Independence under his command.

Conferences that Shaped INA

A round of two primary meetings with all crusaders of INA was held in Singapore in March 1942. First one at SC Goho's house on 3rd March and other one on 9th March 1942. In order to give an impetus to the Indian Independence movement in the East, Fujiwara expressed a strong desire that some selected Indians should visit Tokyo and meet the members of the Japanese Government. In the first week of March 1942, a conference of important Indians was being called in Tokyo from 28th till 30th March 1942. The Tokyo Conference was held on the invitation of Rash Behari Bose who was instrumental in persuading the Japanese authorities to stand by the Indian nationalists and ultimately support actively the Indian freedom struggle abroad. To select the delegates for this conference from amongst the civilians and also to draft the agenda and chalk out the line of action to be placed before the conference, a meeting of about twenty prominent Indians was called at Singapore on 9th March, 1942.

For the first time, Mohan Singh met Swami Satyanand Puri and Baba Amar Singh, who had come from Bangkok to participate in this meeting. Swamiji was the head of the Indian National Council and Thai Bharat Cultural Lodge of Thailand. He was a great intellectual and a reputed saint. Baba Amar Singh ji was arrested in Singapore during the First World War for his anti-British activities and kept in various prisons by the British in the Far East for about 20 years including in Mandalay with Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. He escaped and settled in Bangkok. At the time of Japanese invasion, this great patriot was running Indian Independence League in Bangkok. Shri N. Raghvan and K. P. K. Menon also made very good impressions upon Mohan Singh.

On 24th April, 1942, Gen Mohan Singh called a meeting of over thirty important senior officers from amongst the Indian Prisoners of War at the Bidadari camp, Singapore. After detailed discussions, many resolutions (known as Bidadari Resolutions) were unanimously passed:

Besides these resolutions, an elaborate Constitution for the Indian Independence League was prepared and adopted. After Bidadari Resolutions, Bangkok Conference was held from 15th June 1942 till 23rd June 1942, and many resolutions were adopted.

Constitution

The Conference adopted a compressive Constitution for the Indian Independence League Organization: Owing to the exigencies of war a number of Indians had to leave these territories, leaving behind their properties without making arrangements for their care and management; the Imperial Government of Japan has promised its unstinted support to the cause of Indian Independence an enormous amount of money is required to carry on and complete the object of the said Movement in East Asia; and an appreciable steady income is likely to be derived from the said properties in the said territories; and in the opinion of the Conference, the handing over of such properties to the Indian Independence League by the authorities concerned, on the distinct understanding that the said properties are to be returned to their rightful owners when claimed, will be welcomed as a sign of goodwill and encouragement towards this Movement.

The Imperial Government of Japan may be pleased to arrange with the authorities in the territories now freed from the domination of the Anglo-Saxons and their Allies by the Imperial Forces of Japan, to hand over the properties owned by the Indians (including those owned by Indian Companies, firms and partnership and left by them owing to the exigencies of war), to the Council of Action in this Movement in trust for their rightful owners, to manage and control the said properties, and advance the income thereof for the use of the Movement, to be repaid as and when claimed by the said owners.

So finally, after Bangkok Resolutions, the INA was finally born and saw the light of the day on 1st September 1942 with General Mohan Singh as its GOC. But Mohan Singh had heated arguments with Japanese and after prolonged differences between INA and Japan, in December 1942, Mohan Singh was arrested and INA was almost dissolved. But Rash Behari Bose kept it alive later on, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was transhipped from Germany to South-East Asia.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was received by Japanese officers and was taken to Tokyo to meet Japanese Prime Minister Tojo who was highly impressed after meeting him. Finally on 2nd July 1943, Netaji arrived Singapore and on 4th July 1943, he was officially handed over the command of INA by Rash Behari Bose.

Preface

I had written a letter to Nehru Museum and Library New Delhi on 27th January 2016, requesting the Director for the hard copy of the interview of Captain Ram Singh recorded and transcribed by the research officer, one Dr. Hari Dev Sharma in 1971. I wanted to incorporate the same in my book, highlighting the creativity and incomparable contributions of Captain Ram Singh. Sh. Ram Singh during his stint in INA as the Music Director. He had scored the original music of our National Anthem, which very few are aware. Subsequently, I received letter No. 53/573/1971 HOD dated the 7th March 2016 from the then research officer, Mr. Jeevan C. Ransikoti. advising me to first, seek permission from the inheritors of Captain Ram Singh, to enable them to make available the contents of Captain Ram Singh's interview for my book.

I tried in vain to contact the family members of the Captain in Lucknow but succeeded in contacting Sh. Ramesh Thakur, the eldest-son of Ram Singh Thakur in November 2020, who lives in Delhi. He expressed his happiness about the book and gave his consent to me to go ahead with the publishing of the book. He also provided me some rare pictures of Captain Ram Singh Thakur and important material for the book.

I had an opportunity and good fortune of meeting Captain Ram Singh Thakur at Dharamshala in May 1999, when he was staying in Circuit House with his son, Uday Shankar. Col. SNS Gurung hailing from Naddi near Mc Leodganj was one of the close friends of Ram Singh. He had been a regular visitor to my office at Information and Public Relations Department in Dharamshala. Incidentally, he had left with me a file of around 80 pages containing the hard copy of the interview of Ram Singh recorded by Nehru Museum and Library New Delhi in 1971. It was the same interview which was available in the archives of Nehru Memorial Museum and for which I had requested them. Col. Gurung had permitted me to use it in my articles or in a book on Captain, if ever, I planned to do so. The Tribune, Chandigarh on 4th May 2002 had published my article on Captain Ram Singh in its Sunday Magazine.

I feel deeply perturbed by the insensitive and indifferent attitude of almost all the Governments towards the historic and memorable contribution of Captain Ram Singh. Congress Governments led by Nehru and Indira, probably, could not digest the significant role of Bose and soldiers of INA and they were almost passive towards Subhash Chandra Bose, Captain Ram Singh and all other members of INA. They have been denied the credit due to them in right earnest. On the other hand, those who follow and adore Tagore do not consider Captain Ram Singh, as the music scorer of the National Anthem. They believe and claim that Rabindranath Tagore had himself set Jana-Gana-Mana to music. Actually, Tagore had written the anthem in 1911 but it had been set to music by Captain Ram Singh only in 1943 as Quami Tarana of INA.

Controversies about the musical notes of National Anthem have besieged the historians since independence.

These controversies ought to be buried for ever in view of the most comprehensive and candid interview of Captain Ram Singh recorded by the Nehru Museum in 1971. From this interview itself, it is evident that the *Quami Tarana* of INA, had been set to tune by Captain Ram Singh only. The lyrics rightly is that of Rabindernath Tagore.

The Captain had proudly played the tune of National Anthem before Mahatma Gandhi at Balmiki Ashram of Kabul civil lines in 1946. During the official invitation on the first Independence Day Celebrations at Red Fort on 16th August 1947, he had performed the National Anthem with full orchestra. He had come all the way from Mussorie for this performance and as a Gorkha soldier, he had felt highly honoured.

Bimal Roy had used the lyrics (the variation of present National Anthem) of Tagore in Film '*Humrahi*' In 1945. Its duration was of 4 minutes. Rai Chand Boral was the Music Director of *Humrahi* film and its tune was quite different from the composition of Ram Singh. After independence, the music composed by Ram Singh as *Quami Tarana* of the INA was reduced to 52 seconds with changes in lyrics too.

Lt Col. Lakshmi Sehgal, who later headed Rani Jhansi Brigade of INA, suggested to Subhash Bose that the song penned by Tagore in 1911 *Jana Gana Mana* would be a better option in comparison to Vande Mataram written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. It was strongly felt in INA that Vande Mataram had some objectionable content and might, hurt the sentiments of Muslim community at large. Bose, thereafter, gave green signal to *Jana Gana Mana* of Tagore to be adopted as Quami Tarana of INA. It began with 'Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse. It was a difficult task to finalize the adaptation of Tagore lyrics into a musical score. Hence, two script writers posted at Radio Singapore 'run by INA' were entrusted with the task of translating and simplifying the highly Sanskritised version of the poem *Jana Gana Mana..* originally composed in Bangla by Tagore. They were Mumtaz Hussian and Abid Ali Safrani. The opening stanza began with *Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse Bharat Bhag Hai Jaga... Jai ho... Jai ho... Jai ho...*

Ram Singh: An Introduction

Captain Ram Singh was born in Bhagsu Khaniara village near Dharamsala, in Himachal Pradesh on August 15, 1914. His father Havaldar Dalip Singh had four siblings: Ram Singh, Raghuvir Singh, Pooran Singh and daughter Durgavati. Dalip Singh had groomed Ram Singh to join the Army. After passing middle examination, he joined the IInd Gorkha Rifles in 1927 at Dharamsala cantonment as a recruit boy in the British Indian Army band. "He was also inspired by his maternal grandfather Nathu Chand to learn and pursue his career in music. Ram Singh was married to Premu Devi.

The word "Thakur" was attached to the name of Gorkha soldier Captain Ram Singh Thakur in his official service records while serving in the British Army, the Indian National Army (INA), and the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC). This usage denotes his sub-caste, whereas his main caste is Gorkha. However, in Nepali/Gorkhali society, as well as in local parlance and dialects prevalent in parts of India-particularly the North-Eastern States, Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Assam-and also in Nepal, the term or caste "Thakur" is sometimes commonly referred to as "Thakuri" also.

He served in British Indian Army, Indian National Army and PAC Lucknow from 1928 to 1974. He held the rank of Company Havildar Major and his unit was 1st Gorkha Rifles.

He took part in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa War.

In the Army, Singh combined his love for music alongwith his service. He was trained in classical and western music as well as ballad, brass band, string band and dance band by renowned British musicians Hudson, Danish and Rose. Apart from his interest in music, he was fond of football, sports and wrestling. Singh earned the King George VI medal while serving in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa between 1937 and 1939. Promoted in 1941 to Company Havildar Major, he was sent to Singapore and Malaya with his unit during 2nd World War. In December 1941, the Japanese forces attacked the Malaya-Thailand border and forced the British army to make a retreat.

On February 15, 1942, Singapore was conquered by Japan as a result of which the INA got a fillip. Capt. Ram Singh also joined the INA to free himself from the clutches of Japan. Subhash Chandra Bose was instrumental in tapping the talent of Captain Ram Singh as a dedicated music composer. Subhash ji had told him that the tune of *Qaumi Tarana* should be so powerful and inspiring that when INA soldiers render the same, it should stir the soul of not only the soldiers but millions of Indians also, As such he kept on practicing the *Qaumi Tarana* at Deedadri camp in Singapore. The day Indian National Army took shape in the Cathay Building of Singapore, the song 'Subh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse' was played. On October 31, 1943, the INA came into power and his orchestra played the *Qaumi Tarana.* The Cathay Building reverberated thunderously. It was a humble step towards liberating India from the British rule.

When he joined INA alongwith more than 60 thousand British Indian soldiers captured by Japanese armed forces in 1941, the Captain was entrusted to shoulder the responsibility of INA orchestra as its head. It was a great honour to the Gorkha Sepoy who, from a humble beginning, had risen to the coveted and prestigious position of Music Director of Indian National Army. Apart from the 'Quami Tarana' of INA, Ram Singh scored as many as 64 tunes and songs for inculcating the spirit of patriotism and nationalism amongst the jawans of INA. One of the most popular marching songs written and composed by Ram Singh was *Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja / Khushi Ke Geet Gaye Ja/ Ye Zindagi Hai Kaum Ki Too Kaum Pe Lutaye Ja...*, the performance of which was banned by British Regime before Independence. His music inspired a generation during the freedom struggle and continues to be an integral part of India's military and ceremonial heritage.

The musical talent and background of Ram Singh was spotted by Subhash Chandra Bose and he inspired him to score music of *Quami Tarana* of INA. But it was not an easy task. There were long parleys and discussions on choosing *Vande Mataram* or *'Jana...Gana...Mana...'*. INA had a cosmopolitan character and the Army personnel represented a secular image. It was homogeneous blend of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and even Christians.

After the end of the war, Singh was shipped back to India with his fellow soldiers. Imprisoned at the Kabul Lines of the Delhi Cantonment, Captain Ram Singh had an opportunity to play the National Anthem of the INA in the presence of Mahatma Gandhi in Delhi. INA soldiers were imprisoned at Kabul line cantonment in Delhi. About 7 p. m. they were asked to get ready. Two or three cars stopped in front of the barrack. The flag of Army General was fixed on the first car. Bapuji stepped down from the General's car. He was accompanied by Sardar Patel. Mahatma Gandhi had said, 'With the mercy of the British Government, I have got an opportunity to meet you people'. Then Bapuji asked about the name and village of each INA soldier. General Bhonsle of the INA made a plea to Sardar Patel that the INA soldiers wanted to play the *Qaumi Tarana*. Bapuji sought permission from the English Army General who readily agreed to.

India attained Independence on August 15, 1947, and the next morning Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled the Tricolour on the ramparts of the Red Fort and addressed the nation. It was on this occasion that Capt. Ram Singh was especially invited to play the tune of *Qaumi Tarana* of the INA alongwith the members of his orchestra group from Mussourie. Later the duration of the tune was shortened to 52 seconds with changes in the original script. However, the musical composition was adopted in its original form, but the tune was made little faster by music arrangers.

After Independence, Ram Singh was recruited in the 3rd Battalion of PAC at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh in 1948 by Shri Jagdish Prasad Bajpai, Commandant and later was promoted as the Band Master in the Rank of Inspector. Thakur retired in 1974. Upon retirement, he was accorded the honorary rank of DSP. He was known as "DSP Band of UP Police" at the time of his retirement.

His final years were difficult and controversial, for which the Government drew much criticism as he was initially denied the status of a freedom fighter by the government while the State government of Uttar Pradesh later faced contempt proceedings for withholding the corresponding payment although the amount in question was meagre. Captain suffered epilepsy attack in 2001, and after remaining bedridden for nearly a year, died on 15 April 2002. He was cremated with State honours at Bhaisakund, Lucknow. However, the State Government of Uttar Pradesh was again criticised for the absence of notable or prominent

Government officials, except a few police officers during his cremation. He was survived by his three sons Prakesh, Ramesh and Uday Shanker.

He was conferred with many Awards including George VI Medal, 1937, Netaji Gold Medal (Azad Hind), 1943, Uttar Pradesh 1st Governor Gold Medal, 1956, President Police Medal, 1972, Sangeet Natak Academi (UP Music and Drama Academy) Award, 1979, Sikkim Government Mitrasen Award, 1993, and the First Azad Hind Fauj Award by the West Bengal Government in 1996.

1

Unsavoury Criticism of Tagore

Rajendra Rajan

Since the writing of *Jana Gana Mana* in 1911, the poem of Tagore was deep into controversies. Tagore had admitted that an official in George Durbar, who incidentally was also one of his close friends, was behind the writing of *Jana Gana Mana* probably to felicitate the Emperor. There were rumours in media and even within the Congress Party that since some members of Tagore family were working as employees in East India company, Tagore was inclined to write a song in the praise of George. Protests had erupted as the lines in lyrics '*Bharat Bhagya Vidhata*' were in praise of the king of England. At that time relations between Indians and Britishers were at the lowest ebb, the poem of Tagore sparked controversy. The nation in general was aghast, that a Nobel Laureate, a fierce patriot and a nationalist had composed a poem in the praise of the Emperor.

Ethics of National Anthem

National Anthem refers to a musical composition that has been selected by an authorized government and is meant to represent a country's patriotic ethos. It generally helps citizens relate to the country's spiritual and philosophical sentiments, its rich culture and colorful history. It presents a country's identity to the world and it acts as an instrument of unity among its citizens. The song was originally composed in Bengali by Tagore on December 11, 1911. The parent song, *Bharat Bhagyo Vidhata* is a Brahmo hymn which has five verses and only the first verse has been adopted as National Anthem. The National Anthem conveys the spirit of pluralism, the concept of 'Unity in Diversity'.

The original song *Jana Gana Mana* was written in a Sanskritized dialect known as Sadhu Bhasha. The words are primarily noun but can be used as verbs alternatively. The words again are common in most of the Indian languages and are accepted as such.

Lyrics Generate Bitterness

A controversy surrounds the poem *Jana Gana Mana* right from its beginning. A section of congress leaders alleged that Tagore wrote this song in praise of King George V as indicated by the use of the words like "Adhinayaka" and *Bharat Bhagya Vidhata.* The writing of the poem coincided with the first visit of English Monarch to India and his Coronation at Delhi Durbar in the year 1911. Decades later in a letter to Mr. Pulin Bihari Sen in December 1939. Tagore himself had dismissed these fears. He wrote, "A certain high official in His Majesty's service, who was also my friend, had requested me to write a poem of felicitation towards the Emperor. The request simply amazed me. It caused a great stir in my heart. In response to that great mental turmoil, I pronounced the victory in *Jana Gana Mana* of that *Bhagya Vidhata* (God of Destiny] of India who has from age after age held steadfast the reins of India's chariot through rise and fall, through the straight path and the curved. That Lord of Destiny, that Reader of the Collective Mind of India, that Perennial Guide, could never be George V, George VI, or any other George. Even my official friend understood this about the song. After all, even if his admiration for the crown was excessive, he was not lacking in simple common sense".

History of Indian National Anthem

The song *Bharat Bhagya Vidhata* was first sung on the second day of the annual session of the Indian National Congress in Calcutta on December 27, 1911. The song was rendered by Sarla Devi Chowdhurani, Tagore's niece along with a group of school children in the presence of prominent Congress leaders like Bishan Narayan Dhar, Indian National Congress President and Ambika Charan Majumdar. The song was published under the title *Bharat Vidhata* in the Tatwabodhini Patrika In 1912. It was the official publication of the Brahmo Samaj and was edited by Tagore. Outside Calcutta, the song was first sung at a session in Besant Theosophical College in Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh on February 28, 1919. The song enthralled the college authorities and they adopted the English version of the song as their prayer, which is rendered, as such even today.

On India attaining freedom, the Indian Constituent Assembly assembled for the first time as a sovereign body on August 14, 1947, midnight and the session closed with solitary performance of *Jana Gana Mana*. The members of the Indian Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations held at New York in 1947 gave a recording of *Jana Gana Mana* as the country's National Anthem, which was yet to be approved and finalized by Constituenty Assembly of India. The song was played by the house orchestra in the presence of a gathering comprising of representatives from all over the world.

2

INA Quami Tarana Reshaped as India's National Anthem

Rajendra Rajan

As India awoke to Independence on 15th August 1947, the question of having a National Anthem of a free nation started stirring the souls of leaders of Congress besides millions of Indians. No thought had been given to this important issue prior to Independence as against adoption of National Flag. The song of ruling Britishers "God Save the King... " could no more be played on Indian Army Bands nor from other platform. It took almost two and half years for the newly formed Government of India to select a National Anthem. The anthem was declared and adopted by the President of India on 24th Janaury 1950 i. e. exactly two days before India became a Republic on 26th January 1950.

Nehru on National Anthem

The National Anthem was approved after a brain storming sessions by members of Constituent Assembly and the Governors of Provincial States soon after Independence. Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had addressed the Parliament On 25th August 1948.

Nehru had said, "The question of having a National Anthem tune to be played by orchestras and bands became an urgent one for us immediately after August 15, 1947. It was as important from the point of view of our Defence Services and our foreign embassies and legislations and other establishments. It was obviously not suitable for 'God Save the King' to be played by our army bands, or abroad, after the changeover to independence. We were constantly being asked as to what tune should be played on such occasions. We could not give an answer because the decision could only be made ultimately by the Constituent Assembly."

The *Jana-Gana-Mana* tune, slightly varied, had been adopted as National Anthem by the Indian National Army in South-East Asia and had subsequently attained a degree of popularity in India also. On the occasion of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1947 in New York, our delegation was asked to handover the script of National Anthem for the orchestra to play on that particular occasion. The delegation possessed a record of *Jana-Gana-Mana* and they gave this to the orchestra who practiced it. When they played it before a large gathering, it was appreciated, and representatives of many nations asked for a musical score of this tune which struck with them as distinctive and dignified. This orchestral rendering of *Jana-Gana-Mana* was recorded and sent to India. This tune was practiced by our Defence Services bands. Foreign embassies and Legations also used this whenever there was an occasion. We received messages of appreciation and congratulations on this tune from various countries. Many expert musicians in India and abroad, as well as several bands and orchestras practiced it. The All India Radio (AIR) collected quite a number of renderings of the song.

It had been adopted as the 'National Anthem' by the

Indian National Army and was found to be more suitable than *Vande Mataram* for bands and orchestras.'

Nehru said, "Apart from the general appreciation with which this tune was received, there was at the time not much choice for us, as there was no proper musical rendering available to us of any other National Song which we could send abroad. At that stage, I wrote to all the Provincial Governors and asked their views about our adopting *Jana-Gana-Mana* or any other song as the National Anthem. I asked them to consult their Premiers before replying. I made it perfectly clear to them that the final decision rested with the Constituent Assembly, but owing to the urgency of some directions being sent to foreign Embassies and the Defence Services, a provisional decision had become essential. Every one of these Governors, except one (the Governor of the Central Provinces) signified their approval of *Jana-Gana-Mana.* Thereupon, the cabinet considered the matter and came to the decision that provisionally *Jana-Gana-Mana* should be used as the tune for the National Anthem till such time as the Constituent Assembly came to a final decision."

Instructions were issued accordingly to the Provincial Governors. It was very clear that the lyrics of *Jana-Gana-Mana* was not entirely appropriate and some changes would be necessary. The more important was the tune to be played by bands and orchestras and not the wording. Subsequently, the new Premier of West Bengal informed us that he and his Government preferred *Vande Mataram.* This is the position at present. It is unfortunate that some kind of argument has arisen between *Vande Mataram* and *Jana-Gana-Mana.* However, *Vande Mataram* is obviously and indisputedly the premier national song of India, with great historical tradition and intimately connected with our struggle for freedom. That position it is bound to retain and no other song can displace it. It represents the passion and poignancy of that struggle, but perhaps not so much the culmination of it.

It was felt that the tune of National Anthem was more important than the words and that this tune should be such as to represent the Indian musical genius as well as the Western, so that it is equally adaptable to orchestral and band music. And is apt for being played abroad. Past experience had shown us that *Jana-Gana-Mana* tune had greatly appreciated and admired abroad. It is very distinctive and there is life and movement in it. It was thought by some people that the *Vande Mataram* tune with its great attraction and historical background was not suitable for being played by orchestras in foreign countries, and there was not enough movement in it. It was decided therefore, that *Vande Mataram* should continue to be the National Song for India, and *Jana-Gana-Mana* the National Anthem. The wording of *Jana-Gana-Mana* is to be suitably altered to comply with the existing circumstances in india. This question has to be considered by the Constituent Assembly and it is open to the Assembly to decide. It may decide on a completely new song or tune if one is available."

Significance and Guidelines

Since 1947, Government of India had been issuing guidelines for the performance and rendering of National Anthem which every citizen of India is bound to adhere. Our National Anthem symbolizes the spirit of Unity in Diversity and, of course, it reminds us of our rich cultural milieu and diverse traditions. It fills a spirit of patriotism in every citizen of India and hence, sanctity is attached to it. Let us have a look at the guidelines attached to the National Anthem. . .

The National Anthem is perhaps one of the most potent declarations of a country's independent status. India is a nation of multiple languages and dialects. *Jana Gana Mana* is understood unequivocally throughout India and thus, brings forth the spirit of unity among these diverse languages. Our National Anthem conveys very aptly the traditions and values that still hold strong as the backbone of the country. It helps reinforce the accepting and assimilating nature of Indian culture along with its tolerance to pluralism. *Jana Gana Mana* appeals to the country's patriotic emotions and helps unifying the different races, castes and creeds by solemn singing of the hymn-like verses.

The full version of the National Anthem requires duration of approximately 52 seconds to be played. The National Anthem is a symbol of pride for the citizens of the country and is required to be played on specifically designated occasions which are listed below:

1. The full version of the National Anthem is played on the following occasions:
    a. Accompanying the performance of National Salute on ceremonial occasions to the President of India or Governors of States/Union Territories.
    b. During parade demonstrations in front of the dignitaries referred in the preceding point.
    c. Before and after the President's address to the nation.
    d. Before arrival and departure of the President or Governor from a formal ceremony.
    e. When the National Flag is hoisted during cultural occasions.
    f. When the Regimental Colors are presented.
2. The National Anthem is not to be played for the Prime Minister generally, except under special circumstances.
3. On the occasion where the National Anthem is performed by a Band, a roll of drums is to precede the

actual performance, in order to let the audience know and prepare for paying respect. The roll will be 7 paces of slow march, will start slowly, ascend to a loud volume and should remain audible till the last beat.

Code of Conduct

A specific set of rules and regulations have been set by the Government of India to oversee the proper and correct rendition of the National Anthem. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, was penned down by the Government of India to prevent any intentional disrespect or insult towards the National Anthem of the country. Offenders are punishable up to three years of imprisonment as well as monetary fine.

The following codes of conduct are to be observed by Indian citizens whenever the National Anthem is played:

1. Should stand up to attention.
2. Individual's head should be held high
3. One should be looking forward.
4. Mass singing of the National Anthem is to accompany the unfurling of the National Flag.
5. No parody/distortion of words or music of the National Anthem is allowed.

Tagore verses Ram Singh

Even after Independence, music composition of *Jana-Gana-Mana* remained contentious. . . either it was Ram Singh or Tagore. Sometimes, it appears to be a battle drawn between Gorkha and Bengali communities. Tagore has been a celebrity and is worshipped like a God by his fans in Bengal. On the other hand, Ram Singh is also hero of Gorkha community. The claims and counter-claims continue to belittle the contribution of both Tagore and Ram Singh in a country which never fails to seek pride in its rich cultural heritage and the spirit of tolerance. However, in an atmosphere of controversies, it is imperative to look at some historical facts.

Lt. Col. (Retd.) Lakshmi Sehgal of INA in her letter on 21stFebruray, 1997 sent to one of the leading newspapers of India *Pioneer*, Lucknow Edition had raised some important facts about the composer of original music of National Anthem.

This is with reference to an article (The pioneer. 14-2-97) by Archana Srivastava called "INA National Anthem and Captain Ram Singh." Being one of the few surviving officers of the INA. I have been closely associated with all matters relating to and initiated by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Therefore, I feel qualified to condemn this unseemly and unnecessary controversy raked up by the writer.

Firstly Captain Ram Singh was undoubtedly 'brave Gorkha soldier'. He was also a born musician and this earned him the wrath of his father. For he was constantly playing on flutes of his own making and other improvised string instruments like the violin. His father like CS Roy was insensitive to his talents. Family tradition forced Ram Singh to join the Gorkha regiment. Here he learnt the rudimentaries of western musical traditions from the Gorkha band.

His unit was sent to Malaya when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and he was one of the 60,000 Indians who surrendered to the Japanese and who were handed over to Gen. Mohan Singh, who formed the first INA Ram Singh voluntarily joined the INA.

He got the permission of Gen. Mohan Singh to start the INA band. At that time there was a symphony orchestra conducted by an eminent German in Singapore. Ram Singh was given permission to join the orchestra to improve his knowledge of western music. He used to take part in the concerts and I have heard him play Beethoven, Schubert and other well known composers. I had the opportunity of meeting the conductor of the orchestra who had said that had Ram Singh received proper training at an early age, he would have been an outstanding world class musician.

This smacks of the most contemptible form of ethnic prejudice.

A few points regarding the National Anthem. Till Netaji came to S. E. Asia, Vande Mataram was sung at all military and civil gatherings and could never be sung in an inspiring way as no one knew it correctly. Netaji on arrival said though Vande, Matram had relevance during the Partition of Bengal, it could never be the National Anthem as there were portions in it objected to by Muslims. A few days after his arrival, a women's meeting was held where the call for the Rani of Jhansi regiment was given. On this occasion, we sang *Jana Gana Mana.* The very next day Netaji called a meeting of military/Civilians and women and said that he felt *Jana Gana Mana* would be more appropriate as the National Anthem.

Only two things had to be changed. The highly Sanskritised words had to be translated into simpler Hindustani and the tune should be martial and inspiring. A committee was set up to give recommendations within a week. Ram Singh and his group were given the task of setting the music. Within a week they did and Netaji approved it.

The musical score was sent to Germany and transcribed by experts to be played by a full military orchestra. This proved to be an unforgettable piece of music based on the original composition of Ram Singh. This information, I hope, will put an end to this unseemly controversy and also put an end to the prejudice. Finally I would like to appeal to all

Bengali chauvinists and say that neither Rabindra Nath Tagore nor Netaji were the exclusive property of Bengalis. They belong to all Indians and peace-loving people.

Sh. B.N. Chatterjee of Lucknow had also written a letter in the same column wich reads as follows:

Kindly refer to "Claim on Anthem distresses Ram Singh" (The Pioneer. 14-2-97). I would like to bring to your kind notice the following facts: "Capt. Ram Singh of the INA was friend of mine when I first met him at Lucknow when he was the Band Master of P.A.C. in 1951/52. Capt. Ram Singh had told me that he had tuned the INA National Anthem of *Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse Bharat Bhag Hai Jaga* etc. on the quick marching pattners of 120 words per minute as was done for *Kadam Kadam Bhrhaye Ja Khushi Ke Geet Gaye Ja* etc.

Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana* was being practiced in a slow motion. It is true that the National Anthem which was tuned in 1947 from Red Fort was the one made by Captain Ram Singh in quick time. This timing was adopted for the National Anthem."

3

The Jana... Gana... Mana... Man

Jyoti Thapa Mani

It is a matter of pride that an Indian Gorkhali who learned music as a band-master of the 2/1 Gurkha Rifles, has contributed to India's most beloved songs: India's National Anthem and India's Army song *Kadam Kadam badheye ja.*

The story of the National Anthem began with Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's hymn *Jana Gana Mana* written by the poet in 1911. In a meeting in Singapore in 1943, it was suggested by Lakshmi Sehgal (who had heard it in 1911) to Bose as the anthem for the INA, who then said: "This is a truly representative National Song. But the words are really Bengali or Sanskritised Hindi. They are not Hindustani." With the majority of the INA men being Sikhs, Punjabis, North Indians, Muslims and Gorkhas-the language of the Indian masses, Hindustani was important for everyone to understand and sing easily.

In order to have a simpler Hindustani version, the song was rewritten by Mumtaz Hussain and Colonel Abid Hassan Safrani as *Shubh Shukh, Chain Ke Barkha Barse,* a mixture of Tagore's song. In 1943, at the Cathay Building in Singapore, Bose asked Ram Singh Thakur to compose a tune for the new Hindustani version of the hymn, requesting specifically for a rousing martial tune, not the kind that would put people to sleep. Bose believed greatly in music as a great source of inspiration for a fighting force in action with a cause.

Finally, Ram Singh sang the song to Bose in the tune he had specially composed. Bose loved it. The words of "Shubh Shukh" came under some flak because some words were too "Hindu", which would not go well with the non-Hindu Indian soldiers. *Jana Gana Mana* was brought back with some simplification of the original words. The "martial" music score created by Ram Singh remained with this second version.

Azad Hind Gazette, 30th April 1944, Burma: Proceedings of a meeting held at Bose's residence, Burma from Saturday, 1st April, 1944, 10 p. m. till Sunday, 2nd April 1944, 3 a. m., presided by Bose. The following statement was reported: "...In this connection it may be noted that the National Anthem as decided by the Provisional Government of Azad Hind is a modernized Hindustani adaptation of Rabindranath Tagore's famous hymn beginning with the words, *Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka Jaya Hey*—By order, S. A. Ayer, Secretary to the Provisional Government of Azad Hind Fauj. Thus, the Hindi version of "*Jana Gana Mana*" from Tagore's hymn, set to Ram Singh's new modern martial music became the "kaumi Tarana" or National Anthem of Azad Hind. In 1947, when India gained her independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru chose the INA anthem to be India's National Anthem. The music was sent to English musician, composer and organizer Herbert Murill to be sheet-written for a full orchestra rendition.

In 1997, a controversary raged over Ram Singh's contribution-questioning a mere Gurkha soldier's ability to compose music, which humiliated and hurt Ram Singh. The matter was put to end by Lt. Colonel (Retd) Lakshmi Sehgal's letter written to The Pioneer newspaper, Lucknow edition published on 24 February 1997, of the choice of Tagore's hymn *Jana Gana Mana* being chosen as the INA's anthem

> "Only two things had to be changed, the highly Sanskritised words had to be translated into simpler Hindustani and the tune should be martial and inspiring. Ram Singh and his group were given the task of setting the music. Within a week they did and Netaji approved. The musical score was sent to Germany and transcribed by experts to be played by a full military orchestra. This proved to be an unforgettable piece of music based on the original composition of Ram Singh."

Mr B. N. Chatterjee from Lucknow also wrote explaining that Ram Singh tuned the National Anthem on the quick marching pattern of 120 words per minute as was done for *Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja Khushi Ke Geet Gaye Ja.* Chatterjee's letter in The Pioneer, 24 February 1997 mentioned "It is true that the National Anthem which was tuned in 1947 from Red Fort was the one made by Capt. Ram Singh in quick time. This timing was adopted for the National Anthem.

On 15 August 1947, Prime Minister Nehru unfurled the tricolor flag at Red Fort, New Delhi. Thakuri was invited to play INA's anthem *Qaumi Tarana* on his violin (gifted to him by Bose). Denying Netaji's band-Major Ram Singh's role is equivalent to denying Netaji and the INA's contribution to the National Anthem, including the Indian Army song "*Kadam Kadam*" and the contribution to India's freedom movement altogether.

From
Dr. Lakshmi Sehgal
M. B. B. S. D. G. O
Chale : 8/193, ARYA NAGAR
KANPUR-208 002

To
Mrs. Jyoti Thapa Mani,
NEW DELHI -110024

6th Aug. 2007

Dear Mrs. Mani,

This is with reference to your letter dated 21st May, 2007 which you have written to Subhashini, I am very deeply grieved that Captain Ram Singh Thakur's contribution to our National Anthem has not been suitably recognised by the Government of India. I have written several letters to the Home Ministry, Government of India recounting and recommending the valuable contributions of Captain Ram Singh and his band of musicians in composing and playing the various songs of the INA. I am also aware of the fate of many Gorkha soldiers who were imprisoned and tortured for having joined the INA. It is not too late that the Government of India should rectify this great injustice.

I am the only surviving senior officer of the INA and so far, all my appeals for justice have fallen on deaf ears, I therefore, request you to form a committee of the families of Gorkha soldiers who had joined the INA. and try and pressurise the Government of India to recognize the valuable services of the Gorkha soldiers and the officers in the INA. which was largely responsible for independence to India. I shall render whatever help is necessary but do not think, it will be practical to be the main person in this petition.

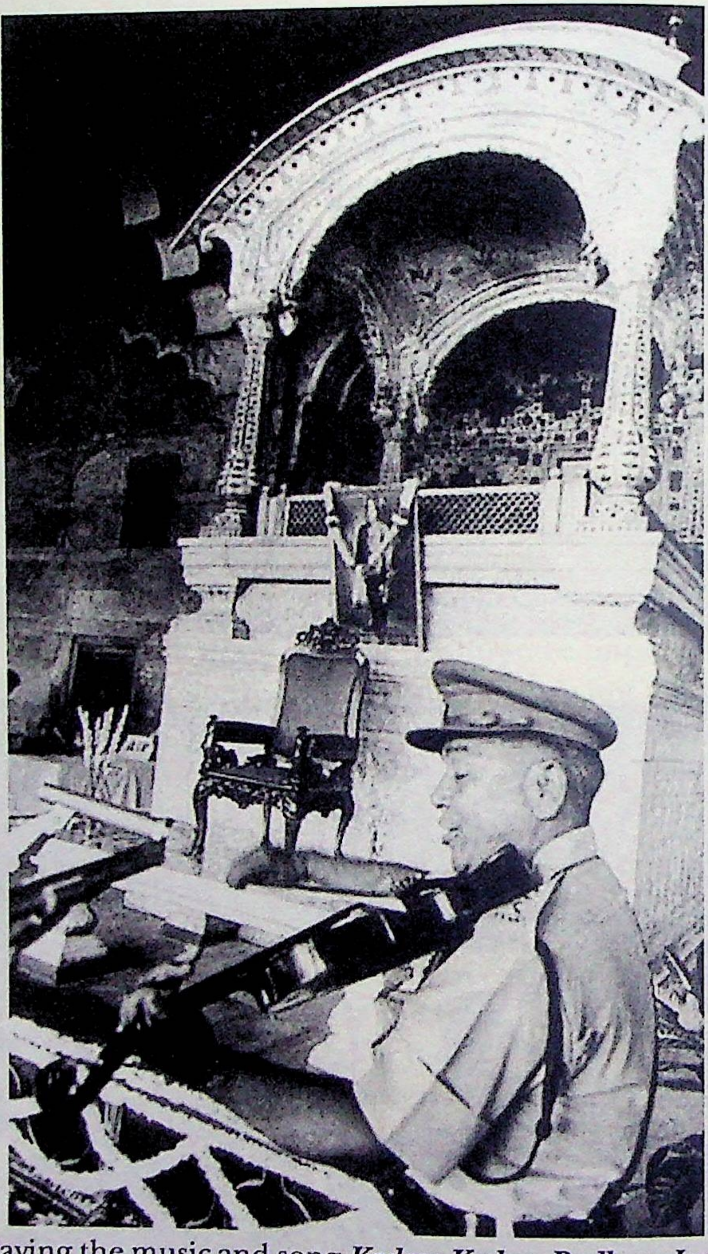
JAI HIND
Yours sincerely,

(Dr. LAKSHMI SEHGAL)

Courtesy: From the book of the author - *The Khukri Braves.*

Conducting PAC Band

Conducting PAC Band



Playing the music and song ***Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja*** on the occasion of the arrival of the Chair of Subhash Chandra Bose from Japan at Red Fort in Delhi in 1981.

PART II

Archives of Nehru Museum

4

Ram Singh Reveals the Untold Story of INA

Dr. Hari Dev Sharma

(This Interview was recored by Dr. Hari Dev Sharma, Research Officer of Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi in 1971 & later was transcribed in Hindi)

Dr. Hari Dev Sharma Mr. Ram Singh, In which platoon were you serving before joining INA and what were the circumstances that made you join INA? Please tell about it.

Captain Ram Singh Thakur: Mr. Sharma, I was recruited in second Gorkha platoon at Dharamshala. I got my Military Training there. I also learnt how to play band there. I was deeply interested in it. Then I was promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major. When the Second World War started, we moved to Secundrabad in 1941. After twelve days we reached Malaya. After reaching Malaya we continued to have training in Jungle Warfare. When Japan announced war against America on 8th December1941, we went to the Jiva War Front beyond Ippo. We reached Aloestar on 9th and reached Jiva Front that evening. Till 11th December, we fought fiercely against Japanese. After that our battalion was completely cut off from our brigade.

The attack of Japanese was quite furious on us, but we countered it with equal force. Even we used small daggers (Bhujali) and Nepalese small sharp knives (Khukhri) to counter the attack. After all the headquarters of our battalion were destroyed, I came out of the Gatau-Chug and saw that all my fellow soldiers were lying dead there. I went to the forest walking over the dead bodies and beat about the bush for three or four days and couldn't find the way. Then I met a few friends in the jungle and remained starved for a week in the forest. I had no means to have something to eat and drink. After a week of hardships, we somehow reached the market of Aloestar. Our uniform had been torn to shreds by that time. Then we wore the civil dress of that place. After that we were arrested by the Japanese as they recognized us being the men of Army. After that we remained in their custody as Prisoners of War.

On 15th February 1942, when there was the Fall of Singapore. After that a wave in favour of INA started. Captain Mohan Singh who was present there raised the issue of INA and Ras Bihari Bose came from Japan to Singapore. Under his leadership, a spurt of Azad Hind Fouj (INA) rose and we joined that cheerfully at our sweetwill. All our top officers like Gen. J K Bhonsle, Gen. Shah Nawaz Khan, Lokanand sahib, M. Z. Kishano, all our Indian officers there, joined Azad Hind Fouj (INA) After joining INA, our strength started growing to the annoyance of Japanese. Then a few brushes between the two forces took place and even an issue to ban INA arose.

Mohan Singh was arrested. At that time we were very much worried. But Ras Bihari Bose consoled us by telling that there was nothing to worry at all, it has been done by mistake. We have to work for our country. Then another wave arose in which all of us reorganized Azad Hind

Fouj(INA) as Indian Independence League and started working together under the leadership of Ras Bihari Bose. After that when Netaji came to Singapore on 2nd July 1943, Ras Bihari Bose handed over the entire charge to him in a programme organized in cathey Building, Singapore. I myself was present there and welcomed him. We had an orchestra which was called Azad Hind Radio Station. All our people present there sang welcome song for Netaji in a chorus:

Subhashji, Subhashji
Weh jane Hind aa gaye
Hai nazjis par Hind ko,
Weh shane Hind aa gaye

(Subhashji, who is the life and glory of our nation Hind has come here)

After that Netaji blessed us and said that we were required to proceed towards our country, there is no reason to delay . The Army that was formed in a hurry raised funds and a bank named Azad Hind Bank was established and brigades were named as; Subhash Brigade, Nehru Brigade, Azad Brigade and Jhansi Brigade.

Whatever we people were taught, we used to do all that. We used to do this out of patriotism for our country even without water, without any food and faced severest hardships of life. We were prepared to die for the freedom of 38 crores of our countrymen. This clarion call of Netaji was deeply etched in our hearts and souls. There was no distinction of caste and creed amongst us. All of us considered ourselves only Indians, as we were the children of one mother, this was our life. We lived harmoniously with one another. At that time our army moved forward. . . .

On 31st October1942 Azad Hind formed a temporary Government. Everybody took charge respectively in that and swore to do whatever should be done for the sake of our country.

I saw Netaji taking oath that day. He looked upwards invoking God with folded hands and said, "I am doing all this with Your benevolence", and his throat was completely choked, tears started rolling down his cheeks and he could utter these words with difficulty. . . . "Thou bless me so that I may be able to fight till last for my beloved country India and offer last drop of my blood at the altar of freedom of my nation. May I consider all the countrymen equal irrespective of their caste, color or creed." Saying these words in choked voice he bowed before the idol of God and took the pledge. After that the National Anthem *Jana- Gana- Mana* was translated in Hindi. Major Abid Hussain, the private secretary to Netaji transcribed it.

Netaji inspired me to compose its tune. He said "Ram Singh, you have to compose its tune and that should be so enthusiastic that whenever people sing it, they should be filled with zeal and zest. Each and every word of the tune may be fully absorbed and etched in the heart and soul of every countrymen. " Then we paraded and rehearsed on this tune for a week. We paraded to the rhythm of this tune in Bidadari camp. All the officers who were present there including Gen. Shah Nawaz Khan, Mehboob Sahib had their training there. When our Government was initiated, the '*Quami Tarana*' of INA was rendered there. We had the ultimate pleasure.

Netaji asked me before the composition of this tune that we would have temporary government in cathay building and at the time of the formation of this government, we would sing this song, *Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse* then the voice should come out of the heart in such a zealous manner that cathay building might 'burst' into two pieces and sky be visible. The gods and goddesses from sky should shower flowers and those flowers might fall directly on our flag on the echo of *Jai ho, Jai ho,* which must resonate even in India. In this way he trained us. After that INA Government was formed and every battalion was trained in singing this song.

Once in a week, dramas were staged in the evening in battalion as to what must be done for our country by us. What type of difficulties we may face in the way, what might happen, we have to sacrifice our life and we would face and tolerate these troubles gladly for the sake of our motherland and would smile even at the time of death. In this way Netaji blessed us. He used to guide us very well.

The main objective of Azad Hind Fouj was to attain freedom for the motherland from the shackles of slavery. We joined it willingly and served in it happily . We didn't have even an iota of trouble and never bothered about any problem, even hunger never budged. The only goal was to reach our country, and to free our country, we were very hopeful that it would be freed soon. Netaji was sure about that. He repeated time and again that our country had made great sacrifices.' Now the time has arrived that mothers, sisters, children and young men have to fight for the freedom of our country. You must have heard there was a Rani Jhansi regiment too. That was too as per the norms of soldiers. There was a children force too. In children force, the passion, the enthusiasm and sacrifice was the same as it was in the force of young blood. In this way INA was organized and we had joined this.

Haridev Sharma: Do you remember when huge funds had been collected at the appeal of Netaji. What was the reaction of people at it?

Ram Singh: When Netaji addressed the first meeting at Singapore, he at once said that he required 3 crore Rupees.

He mentioned that the money was to arrange uniforms, open hospitals, get medicines and purchase arms and ammunition. We won't ask the Japanese Government to support us in this matter. We have to be self dependent. Our brothers who had migrated from East Asia, were running very good business there, they had enough money. They must offer that money for the sake of their motherland. At this call, all the men offered the money to Netaji with pleasure. The mothers and sisters took off their gold ornaments at that time and piled those up before him. Netaji was welcomed with garlands and those garlands were auctioned. Astonishingly those garlands were sold from one lac to eight lacs.

In this way seven crore was collected on the spot, Netaji had to ask them to stop. Besides the cash, people even offered gold wholeheartedly. Then the bank in the name of Azad Hind Fouj was opened and the amount was deposited in the bank and people who deposited the money got considerable benefits. He didn't ask any Japanese to give him anything, instead created his Army by the money, love and respect given to him by his own people there.

Haridev Sharma: How were the relations between Japanese and Azad Hind Fouj?

Ram Singh: These were not cordial in the beginning. Until Netaji reached there, communications between INA and Japanese foces had not been harmonious. They had no special love for us. But when Netaji came and we formed a temporary government, then Japanese started viewing us with respect. They started to meet our officers and soldiers with great respect. Anyone of the officers who went to them, they used to salute him saying 'Jai Hind' and treated him with great respect. Our morale was so high that we started assuming that we are not less than anybody else in any way.

We had to move ahead for the sake of our country. The spirit behind this feeling was on account of the government, formed there.

Haridev Sharma: What was the reason of change in the attitude of Japanese towards you people?

Ram Singh: When INA was founded, all the prisoners wanted to be inducted in it. Gen. Mohan Singh, Ras Bihari Bose and all of us desired that all the prisoners of war must join INA, but Japanese didn't agree to that, Japanese wanted it to be optional i.e. to join or not to join the INA.

We people had also developed differences on certain issues. Some people were of the opinion that they won't join INA as they felt better as prisoners of war while others wanted to join INA. Therefore, a difference of opinion occurred among us. But it was the benevolence of Almighty that Netaji reached there. It was a boon for us as well as for the residents of East Asia. I offered my heartfelt gratitude to God with Whose benevolence our Government was formed and our flag flew high. The Army so built was strong and was ready for any sacrifice or any contribution for our country.

One of the greatest pleasure was that, the soldiers who had been injured in the battle were taken to an emergency hospital situated 10 to 12 miles away for treatment and these soldiers were so devoted and enthusiastic that after recovery the very next day, they would directly go to the post and fight there. This bullet was nothing for us. To our astonishment, one or two men who had been severely in jured and had a bit skin on their hands, hanging below, without waiting for any doctor they used to remove and operate with their boyenett themselves and say loudly, 'Leave it, what is this hanging, nothing', and were ready for warfront.

Mothers and sisters also helped a lot. They used their sarees and dhotis to provide bandages in the hospital. I myself saw in Rangoon that on Sunday and Thursday, all the mothers and sisters from civil used to prepare food and serve it with their own hands in all the hospitals and used to bandage the injured with their own hands. There was so much love. We got so much love and affection there that it seemed that they are our real mothers who were showering gratitude and affection upon us. Under the leadership of Netaji, we loved our country so much and were in tearing hurry to reach our country and do something for our nation. We were least concerned about our death and were ready for any sacrifice, our lives being a small price for our nation. We used to sing patriotic songs and live very harmoniously.

Haridev Sharma: What was the number of soldiers in the Army?

Ram Singh: Number! We used to sing a song in which it mentioned about an army of three lac soldiers as Netaji used to do. It meant the total number in the Army was three lac soldiers. It included Rani Jhansi, children Army and administration, including all, this much Army had been formed. It was above one lac soldiers. There was a population of 35 lacs only at that time in Singapore. Netaji had talked of total mobilization. He had declared that even if entire Army perished in the war for freedom, then their brothers in civil who were left behind here, would join the Army and come forward to move towards Motherland. Such was the fortitude of organization.

Haridev Sharma: As you were in Gorkha Regiment, was this regiment willing to be merged in INA?

Ram Singh: It was very difficult, because there were three Gorkha platoons, one second first, second first and third second ninth. We Gorkha soliders were in the army of British Government. Therefore, most of them were not aware of freedom struggle. We came to know of it later on. At that time we didn't know, what the freedom was? Our duty was to work according to the discipline, order and the training we got. It was good for us and we did that. After reaching there, when we observed the on going struggle for freedom and then more details followed making us realize that we were also Indians. Our India was suffering for centuries, and we were no better than slaves, we must fight for our nation. Then we raised a new slogan. We used to go among our soldier brothers, and make them understand and which they absorbed slowly, and gradually were in love with the motherland, most of the soldiers joined Azad Hind Fouj happily.

Haridev Sharma: When you used to go to persuade then did they understood and agreed?

Ram Singh: No, our reasoning annoyed them and wanted us to leave them alone. What is going to happen to us? We just fight against the Japanese 8 to 10 hours and have no other problem. You are crying freedom, freedom for nothing. What is freedom, what is called freedom, who is our king in India?' They used to talk like this and get irritated. At times they were so upset with me that they even threatened to kill me if I continued to be there. 'You should not come here. ' Even then I used to go there regularly and whatever knowledge I had, I used to make them understand affectionately. I used to sing for them that we all are Indians, there is no difference between us, if we don't do anything for our country at this time then we won't survive in this world. We won't be respected at all. The people of the world won't acknowledge us, therefore, we have to fight for the freedom of our country. This work is quite difficult, we have to sacrifice, we don't know what will happen next, we may be hanged to death or whatever torture, we may be subjected to.

If all of us consider that we are Indians then we must go and free our country. Come on, let us go, it will be a matter of great pride. We came here to die. We came here to fight against the Japanese, why? What is our enmity with the Japanese that we are fighting against? Today if we don't fight for our country, if we don't die for our motherland then this life is futile. I used to persuade them like this. With the grace of God a large number of soldiers joined INA and many of them showed their courage and bravery. They remained in INA as the work and training there was of the type that whosoever came there once did not go back. He became the son of India.

Haridev Sharma: Japanese used to provoke Gorkhas. . . ?

Ram Singh: Yes, you have asked a very good question. Once Japanese tried hard to provoke. There were two three Japanese officers in Radio Station, who used to keep vigil on us. Once they asked me, "Ram Singh, do you go to Gorkha camp and motivate others to join INA. Why do you go there? Leave them." I responded: 'Why sir?' He said that they are very nice and hard working and finish the work in five hours that is expected to be accomplished in ten hours. Let them stay here as prisoners'. I said that they must join INA at any cost. I used to talk to them like this. Once a Japanese officer took all the Gorkha officers from Singapore to Penong without letting anyone know about this movement.

During those days the highest rank was of Subedar Major. There were no Lieutenant or captain, These were exclusively for English only. They were given training for six months in Penong. They misled all of them and were brain washed in considering themselves being not Indians. The Japanese told them that they were not Indians as they looked different and they resembled the Japanese . You are from Nepal and we are from Nepon. Why are you confused that you are Indians, exclusively Indian. Then they sent doctors from the hospitals in Singapore. There the specialists, who examined their bones etc. reported the inch wise distance among their eyes, nose, ear and mouth and told them that there is no difference in our faces, eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Moreover the blood is also the same. Our spirit and zeal is the same, therefore, you must mix up with your own Japanese in any manner.

Standing amidst them, I addressed them, "Beware, don't do this blunder. It is better to die in prison but if you do this blunder, you will fall in the eyes of world. What is this fuss created by you? It can't happen, if you don't want to join INA (Azad Hind Fouj) then live as prisoners, it will be better, but this is not possible. In this way I stopped them and later on they joined INA.

Netaji deputed me to go to schools and teach National Anthem of INA to the children. Besides teach them all the national songs, patriotic songs and how to parade and maintain discipline. Besides going to every camp for monitoring, I used to get my program of music relayed from broadcasting station in the evening. Sometimes I used to do commentary and news in my Gorkhali language.

Haridev Sharma: What was the attitude of Japanese towards the other leaders of India?

Ram Singh: How can I tell you about it?

Haridev Sharma: About Gandhi ji?

Ram Singh: Yes, they held Gandhi ji in high esteem. I tell you about an event in this reference that how Gandhi's name saved an officer from being murdered. It happened when I was in custody at Aloestar in Japan. It was dark at 6 p.m. A Japanese officer brought a Subedar of Second ninth Gorkha named Dil Bahadur and said: Ram Singh, take your man, take him. When I went to take that man I found him trembling like a leaf. He was shaking so hard that I doubted he had fever but he told he was not having fever. Then, I offered him cigarette and he nodded his head in affirmation, I lighted a cigarette for him but he could hardly puff it, his hands were trembling.

It forced me to think what had happened to this man. I asked him to keep cool and tell what had happened. What the matter was. Then I offered him water and made him cool. Then he started telling, Major, I was Hawaldar Major, 'I was going to die today. I asked how? He narrated that in the morning, they were caught downhill Aloestar at a distance of 10-12 miles. We were in an area of warfield.'

'There were five or six English persons as well and two officers of Second Ninth Gorkha, besides three or four from other units, I was among them. The Japanese tied all of us with the Rubber trees on the way and left. They released us, when they came in the evening. We didn't have water or anything else as we remained tied to the trees all the day. As a result, our bodies had almost numbed. When we were released, we fell down and they forced us to board a bus by lifting us. When we were in the bus, my Gorkha cap fell down, and the knotted hair tail on my head was visible. They started moving that plait and started saying that you are of Gandhi, you Gandhi's? I couldn't make out what they said and kept quiet. Then he again said that you belong to Gandhi, you are from India.'

Dil Bahadur Sahib had a fair complexion. He looked like an English in appearance . The Japanese considered him an English, but after seeing the hair tail on his head, they understood that I was an Indian and belonged to the country of Mahatma Gandhi. At this, one of them started moving the hair tail on my head. The officer in Second Ninth Gorkha regiment understood it. He said in Gorkhali language, "Dil Bahadur Sahib, bhannuhas (say are you well), I am of Gandhi, Gandhi's man, I nodded my head and said yes I am also of Gandhi. Then he said, "Oh, please get up from this place and sit on front seat. Then he made me sit on front seat. Then he disclosed that they were going to cut me in pieces i.e. murder me, all these, being taken to the hill are to be butchered. Only you have escaped due to Mahatma Gandhi and due to this hair tail on your head. Just see, my brother, what a God, Mahatma Gandhi is, He is a God, my life has been saved only because of his name. Such was an indelible impression of Mahatma Gandhi in the hearts of the Japanese. Then seeing him we were more attracted towards Mahatma Gandhi and wanted to know who Bapuji was. They used to say respectfully that your country has a noble soul who is called Mahatma ji, Bapuji, Gandhi ji.

Haridev Sharma: Those who were close associates of Netaji, did they co-operate with Netaji all the time?

Ram Singh: They used to co-operate fully. There was no fault on their part but as ill luck would have it, when our Army came to the front the soldiers fought fiercely and confronted the British Government despite being without food, water and clothes in the middle of a grim battle. But then the rain started and reinforcement could not arrive. At that time, Azad Hind Fouj had surrounded Imphal and there were 14 divisions of British force. Those 14 divisions requested INA people in a letter that they should give them way as they wanted to leave Imphal and rush out of it. This was the situation but INA people had ascended a hill and were shouting Delhi chalo, Delhi chalo, Bharat Mata ki Jai, Netaji ki Jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai, Nehruji ki Jai, such slogans were being repeated in frenzy.

Unluckily the ammunition exhausted and there was no food left. We had detained 14 divisions merely out of zeal and optimism, but three or four persons proved traitors who felt weak at heart and informed the British Army about our activities from uphill that we had nothing to eat as there was no ration left and there were no arms and ammunition also with us and asked them to ascend the hill. At this when they climbed the hill then we had to suffer a lot. Then again it rained heavily followed by spread of the Diarrhea and we had to suffer indescribeable hardship. We had to move back and many companions were martyred on the way.

Haridev Sharma: Did you come to know who those were later on?

Ram Singh: Yes, we came to know after coming back to India. Prabhu Dayal Singh or some others like him. Our men located and set their houses and lands on fire. Our men said that such people should not be allowed to stay in a country like India as they were not required here; they were the traitors.

Whenever anyone was going to frontline, Netaji used to meet him and settle his nerves- a sure recipe for a strong man. Only those would go to the front who were ready to die, who were ready to sacrifice their lives. I am unable to give you anything- these were his blessings all the time. The brigade ready to go to frontline was blessed like this that he had nothing to offer them, all he could offer, were four things- hunger, thirst, torture and the last one death. Take this gift from me go to your motherland. These were his principles. Then he gave another slogan after coming back to Rangoon, *Karo Sab Nyocchawar Bano Sab Fakeer* means sacrifice everything you own i. e your house, wealth, clothes etc. and be a fakeer (mystic). Then he gave the last slogan *Tum Mujhe Khoon Do...* Give me blood and I assure you that I will give you freedom. At this time your motherland needs your sacrifice, then what to talk of soldiers, even the children army signed the document in blood piercing their thumbs for recruitment in Suicide Squad, wherever the tanks would go or blasted a bridge, we will go there tying bombs to our bodies ready to die and be martyrs.

Haridev Sharma: Which language was used by Netaji to deliver a speech?

Ram Singh: He delivered it in Hindustani and he spoke it fluently that everybody could understand. If ever English language was required, he used to be very fluent. Wherever Tamil was required then an interpreter in Tamil was arranged. In Singapore I had seen Chidambaram used to translate his lecture and I saw in Rangoon that there was an officer who used to do this job. However, I forgot his name.

Haridev Sharma: Which was the most popular song out of all the songs of INA ?

Ram Singh: One is national song *Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha (The rain of blessings be showered)* and the other was composed by me

Kadam kadam badhaye ja, khushi ke geet gaye ja
Yeh zindagi hai kaum ki, tu kaum par lutaye ja.
(Move step by step singing the songs of happiness to sacrifice your life for the sake of country)
Then there was a song with Hindi soldier:-
Hind sipahi, Hind sipahi
Rakhna hai tujhe Hind me buniyad aman ki
Sarpar tu nikal bandh kar dastar kafan ki
Nigraha iilahi
Hind sipahi, Hind sipahi
Nara-e- inquilab lagatar utha le
Sota hai tera waqt use ab tu jaga le
Na dekh tabahi
Hind sipahi, Hind sipahi
Azad ban kar tod de zanjeer-e gulami
Tazem se de jhuk ke tirange ko salami
He parcha me shahi
Hind sipahi, Hind sipahi

Weh dil hi nahi jisme na ho chah watan ki
Weh aankh nahi jo na take raah watan ki
Azadi ke rahi
Hind sipahi, Hind sipahi

(Oh, the soldiers of India, you have to lay the foundation of independent nation by sacrificing your life and raising the slogan of revolution. You have to break the chain of slavery and salute the Tricolor as the heart is not heart without longing for the nation and the eyes are not eyes that do not see the path of nation)

We used to sing such type of songs and also rendered the songs for our flag:

Kaumi tirange jhande oonche raho jahan mein
Ho teri sir bulandi jyon chand asman mein

(O Tricolor national flag keep moving high and shine like the moon in the sky)

Then there was the most popular song composed by Iqbal:-

Sare jahan se achha Hindostan hamara (Our India is the best all over the world).

This song was loved by one and the all. All the songs of INA were patriotic and we used to sing all these together. No question whether one knew it or not as the parade used to begin with the songs. Whenever we marched in groups or used to go for training, we moved with this song

Hind sipahi, Hind sipahi

And the rhythm of our steps matched with one another and the soldiers were full of zeal and zest. There was a song composed for Rani Jhansi Regiment too:-

Hum Bharat ki beti hain, ab utha chuki talwar
Hum marne se nhi darti, nahi peechhe paav ki dharti
Aage hi aage badhti kas kamar huyi taiyar

(We are the daughters of India and have lifted the sword.

We are not afraid of death and we won't move backward. We are ready to face any consequences and are ready to bear any kind of sufferings.)

Such types of songs were sung by Rani Jhansi Regiment and Children Army. All these songs were based on the theme of patriotism for India. All the songs to be sung were approved by a censor board comprising of officers there.

Haridev Sharma: Who used to compose these songs?

Ram Singh: Our soldiers used to write. There was one Captain Kalyan Chand Hasratji who was in field propaganda unit. He used to write excellent songs. Then there was Falik Sahib. There was Mumtaz Hussain in Radio Station. Gurbakhash Singh Dhillon also wrote a very good song.

It means if the Indian Army is marching on and even if the 'real' brother comes in between and wants you to stand by him and obstruct your destination on the other side, in such circumstances, don't submit before your brother and clear your brother out of the way without caring for relationship. Such was the spirit of sacrifice and martyrdom! Such type of songs were composed, sung and acted upon also.

Haridev Sharma: Do you have any other memory of Subhash Babu?

Ram Singh: There are a lot of memories. I can say so much about him. He was like a voluminous holy book. I was bestowed with his benevolence. This happened in Rangoon. There I had six or seven boils in my underarm and those had turned red. I had a fever due to that. Then my stomach was upset. During those days there was a meeting of Netaji in a hospital. I was to present my event there. The news came and we had to reach there. I asked my commandant Amar Singh ji to convey that I was severely suffering from boils and having acute pain and couldn't lift my hand.

Moreover I was having fever too. I was feeling low on account of this. I told the contingent that they had Nazir Hussain and Hira Lal to present the programme. There were two to four songs and a skit prepared by them and they should perform that. Our team went and performed there at the meeting. Netaji watched and listened to everything.

When he didn't see me then he asked the officers where I was. They told him that I was not well and was suffering from boils and fever also. Subhash ji was worried about my cure. All the officers told this to me. After that Netaji went to Netaji Bhawan and sent a letter to me through a messenger who came on a motor cycle. That messenger reached me around 3. 30 p.m. I was lying on a cot. There was a boy who worked with me named Pooran Bahadur. He told me that there was a post for me, I asked him from where it was. He told me that it had came from Netaji Bhawan. I told him to bring him in and asked the messenger to wait. Then I opened the letter.

He had written, "Dear Ram Singh, I am surprised to know that you are ill, how come? You are the one who entertains and lifts the morale of suffering patients, ailing, young person admitted in the hospital and cure them and there is no doctor for you. You have to recover and accomplish your unfinished job. It is difficult for me even to think of you as a sick person. May you recover at the earliest as possible and fulfill and continue with your hard work."

Yours
Netaji

The letter inspired me a lot, it boosted my energy so much that my eyes filled with tears out of love and I jumped out of bed shouting "Netaji". At that time I couldn't move but I lifted my hands with a jerk and my boils burst out and the pus flowed out. PooranBahadur kept saying, "Sir, what has happened to you? There is blood and blood all over. What happened to you?" I replied, "Operation performed, operation performed! Netaji gave me medicine, It worked and operation was performed." I felt delighted. I wiped out the pus and blood, put on the uniform and went with the messenger to the Netaji Bhawan. When I reached there, Netaji was writing something. I saluted him saying Jai Hind. He said, "O Ram Singh, you were ill." I told him 'I have recovered, Netaji'. He said, "How have you recovered?" I told him that 'I have recovered with the blessings, you had sent, I took those and I have recovered immediately'.

Then he embraced and hugged me and said, "Ram Singh, in this struggle for freedom, in this ferocious battle, this revolutionary battle, no body knows who will reach India or not and see the Tricolour unfurled at the Red Fort. Only the fortunate enough will be there and you will be the one of them, my son, Ram singh will witness those moments and this violin in your hands will be played at Red Fort. Bapuji will listen to it and Nehru ji too will listen. You have a lot of work to do my son, don't fall ill. " You know what patients told him that day? They simply affirmed, being cured bereft of any medicines etc and were ready to move on. You know what they said. They said they have a problem. At being asked what? They had further requested Netaji that Ram Singh must visit them once a week. Please send him twice a week. "My son you are required there also and falling ill is no option with you." I had assured Netaji of never falling ill again.

Haridev Sharma: Do you remember who were the traitors?

Ram Singh: It is a very sad story. Some people came to the frontline and switched over to enemies. Some commandants talked rubbish and disclosed our position and resulting in failure of our scheme and movement. In Rangoon Netaji said in public meeting that he had an atom bomb. That atom bomb was to blast at any time, nobody knew it, and was a matter of great shame. It was great luck for Azad Hind Fauj that after a few years a temporary government was formed, but one of the ministers was the person who had made atom bomb and was about to blast it, and none was sure as to what he would do, we had held him in our grip. After that it was to be decided by a voice vote from all sides that he must be blown away, there was no need to keep him.

Netaji said that the history of India is filled with traitors, and not much has improved. After some time the minister's wife came to me and told me, "Ram Singh, Netaji has said so, don't know what will happen now, what to do?" I told her that Netaji was full of kindness and he won't do anything. He had neither beaten nor tortured anyone. Yes, at a point of time when we had to retreat to Imphal due to a treacherous individual and like any normal human being, Netaji couldn't resist and shouted that he had to cut a sorry figure because of same ungrateful people.

Netaji was shocked at the betrayal of some people, castigating them, he rededicated himself for the freedom of the country even daring death, should it come before the national freedom.

Haridev Sharma: Any details about those who betrayed?

Ram Singh: What to say, they were Indians, if we categorize them on the bases of caste or creed, it will hurt a lot. Moreover, to remember the names of the traitors will not be fair at all.

Haridev Sharma: Who were the ministers turned traitors?

Ram Singh: Those were propaganda and other ministers who used to conspire secretly. Netaji knew everything what they were going to do. Once or twice we had some skirmishes. May I tell you one thing that will astonish you. There was a Matkila island where our Brigade was posted. Our Shah Nawaz sir was also there. Netaji came there from Rangoon. He reached Matkila there in full war uniform carrying full arms and ammunition with a gun in hand. He was observing the war and assessing the ways to move ahead. He was adept in all strategies of war. Somebody leaked out the information that Netaji had reached there and British government took no time to send glider after glider and laid siege over the island.

There were some Japanese battalions which surrendered and communicated that to British Army . Netaji marched forward with his brain gun and when obstructed he retraced back, moved aside, and challenged that nobody could stop him and moved ahead, even alone. "India will come to know that I fought for the sake of my country till my last breath and if I die, it will be for my country. "

In this way he set out, but there was no way to go out. The English had surrounded the island from all sides and it is said that he passed through this surrounded place in the garb of Burmese saint speaking their language and blessing the officers. All the people wished and touched his feet and wishing them back, he crossed them and boarded a boat. After that he sailed through boat covering considerable distance. Then he travelled through a bullock cart and reached Rangoon. The English were sure of Netaji being in island. They searched every nook and corner but couldn't find him. Later on they came to know that the saint, who was travelling by bullock cart was none other than Netaji.

Haridev Sharma: Was Ayyar included in temporary government ?

Ram Singh: Yes Kareem Gani was there, he was also a minister.

Haridev Sharma: Ayyar is in Mumbai now-a-days?

Ram Singh: Yes.

Haridev Sharma: Where is R. K . Palta who wrote My Adventures With INA now-a-days? was he not included in temporary government?

Ram Singh: I don't know. It must be in the knowledge of Mehboob Sahib, just ask him, he can tell. When Netaji was going towards Bangkok, I saw Kareem Gani Sahib at the bunglow of Netaji. His beard was outgrown and he was wearing shoes . Wondering as to what were they doing there. Netaji took them to Bangkok alongwith him and left them in the city to do whatever was required. There was no underground cell connected to them at Bangkok. Therefore, no corporal punishment was given. When Netaji went to Rangoon, he left at night. There was a flag on his car and he was being followed by a convoy of officers' vehicles. Netaji had sent Rani Jhansi Regiment earlier and had made suitable arrangements for them. When he went there the British army had landed at Rangoon. Including Gorkha & Punjabis British Indian army had surrounded Rangoon.

The convoy of Netaji passed through them, just see how daring he was and the convoy went through with the flag unfurled on the car. There were some officers whom Netaji took along as he knew that they would create disturbance, so he took them along with himself. It is said when he went he cautioned about the order in which to march, that his car would be the first and arranged the rest in sequence and instructed how to move. But an officer had stopped his car in the way saying that some of parts had stopped working when he himself had damaged those. He stopped his car and looked around and let the others move saying that his car was out of order. Then he sent the information to the English people that Netaji had just passed through. The English applauded him and treated him very well.

After that all the machine guns and cannons there fired at Netaji incessantly. Netaji laughed and said that one of our friends is left behind and the gift is being sent to us, this was typical of Netaji's behaviour! He remained calm and protected the persons who were with him. He protected all in Maulseen, Citangariver and in jungles. It is said that they continuously faced bombing all the way till they reached Bangkok.

Kareem Gani was arrested by the British and latter was sent to us at Red Fort expecting a quarrel. We celebrated Traitors day in Rangoon. A drama, Gaddar Day was staged there continuously for a week. We tried to show in it that who is called a traitor and what work they do and what reward they get for it. We played this drama whole- heartedly and showed that the English call and say, "Hello, you are very good, oh yes, yes, and I will give you first class Gold medal. After that they slap him at the back and said that if you are not loyal to your country, how can you be loyal to us." We didn't say anything else to them, enough had been conveyed! There was Shah Nawaz sir, who had said that there was no need to say them anything. At that time he had been mocked at. One day at Red Fort he asked me to sing *Sare Jahan Se Achha* as he liked it very much. He used to talk like this that we were the bravest of braves but some of us were traitors also and what they used to do secretly, let me tell you that also.

When I came to Bangkok from Singapore, Netaji ordered me to stay at Bangkok for a week and meet the people there. There was a training camp going on about 60 to 70 miles on the eastern side from Bangkok. I don't remember the name at this time. Sardar Ishwar Singh Indian Chairman of Independence league was in Bangkok. When I went there he greeted me very well. A meeting was held and General Alagappan and Gulzara Singh Sir and another Colonel reached there from Swaraj Desh-Andaman and Nicobar Island which was named as Shaheed and Swaraj Island later on.

I was presented a gold medal by the citizens there at the welcome ceremony. I told them that I didn't need it. Such medals should be presented to those who are sacrificing their lives at war front. I have come here just to boost your morale with my inspiring songs . I fuether told them that I don't work according to these songs I am not entitled for this medal. Then I started going from home to home, one place to another, went to every camp and a little fund was collected for Netaji too. Then Ishwar Singh said that we have to go to the camp too, and we reached the camp that was 60-70 miles away. We reached there in the evening. The whole night I taught the soldiers there the two national songs *Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse* and *Kadam kadam Badaye Ja* with the rhythm of feet.

The next day, when I was coming back The Child Army said that they will accompany me. It was their Child Army day. Then Ishwar Singh wrote an application to Netaji to allow me to stay there for a few days more. Then a plane was arranged for me, by that plane I reached Rangoon. Thereafter arrangements for my stay were made. I used to report at Japanese headquarters and then board the plane. It used to return to Bangkok as it couldn't get space for landing in Rangoon because of American or British planes. When it was repeated for two or three days then I came back and the plane was parked at some other place, I didn't know where it was. When the plane came back then we returned to Bangkok.

So in this way I could not return to Bangkok for 24 hours, then slogans were raised against me at Bangkok. In every house and in every shop, there was discussion that just see Ram Singh, who used to sing *Kadam Kadam Badhaye ja* and did this and that, the fool had been arrested, the Japanese arrested him. He was going in a plane with a transmeter and he was arrested and murdered? There were some infidel elements in INA who provoked people against me, and spewed hatred against me, I had reached Bangkok again at night.

When I entered the officer mess in the morning, people were shocked, 'O Ram Singh, where have you come from dear friend?' Then I narrated the entire story as to what had happened. Then they apprised me about the rumors and my arrest. I wanted to know the the persons behind these rumours. There was a Gorkha named Sher Singh, People told me that he had been saying so. I went to his house, Sher Singh had been living in Bangkok for many years. Her wife and children were natives of that place. When I went there and had just about wished him, he had been taken aback and he just could say, "Oh, my God are you alive?"

I told him, "Father (as I used to call him), you have to accompany me to the office at 11 a. m. tomorrow. I have invited Ishwar Singh telephonically. Tomorrow you have to tell them clearly who told you all about me. Even if I am gone and someone beats you, in tears also you have to tell. The work I did here has been reduced to ashes. " He assured me to do so. Then I rang up Ishwar Singh, he was in Calcutta at that time, a great general merchant who owned a big shop. He had flourishing business there.

"Sir; I am Ram Singh this side. I have come back. " He replied, "O Ram Singh, are you back? Where are you?" I told, "Sir, I am coming to the office just now. " He asked me to reach soon and asked if I had heard everything. He was very sad. I went to the office and knocked and uttered my name to seek permission. He said warmly, "Come inside". Then he said, "Ram Singh, it is my revolver loaded with six rounds, twelve more bullets are there. You can kill anybody you want to shoot and spare last bullet for me."

I asked, 'why?' He responded, "What to say? People here talk ill of you and don't even spare Netaji. " I told, Ishwar Singh, "Sir, I will do such a wonderful job that such things won't happen again. " I further asked how all this had happened? When I reached Bangkok, a man came to me with a cap and supporting beard. After wishing me, he asked if I recognized him. I welcomed him and asked about his identity and he responded that he had come to save me, . 'You have come here in Bangkok and Japanese are delighted to know that you are no more related to INA but work for Japanese instead. He told me that he was my well wisher and had come to save me. Then I asked, 'what should do. ?' He told that a submarine was ready for me, we are going to send you to India just now. I thanked him and asked him to excuse me. Such type of 'enemies' we had met there and you can very well imagine our condition there."

Even then, I did not leave Ishwar Singh and said that at least he must ask from Sharma ji who was the incharge of finance if the matter had been discussed with his nephew. He told "I don't know sir." Then he spoke to me, "Ram Singh, let us finish this matter here." I told that I won't finish here otherwise there will be a lot of humiliation and our movement will be disrupted. We will go. When we went to city and asked someone and he pointed out the boy. When we asked he refused and pointed out another one. In this way they kept on pointing out one another and we enquired from 30-40 shops and 200 -250 persons were pointed out . Then Ishwar Singh said that it is like that. These are poor people who sold milk as there were mostly cowmen.

During the time of atrocities committed by Kansa, Lord Krishna had helped the milk boys. I collected all the people and said, "You must be ashamed of yourself that you said such a mean thing. Can it happen by saying on your part? Let us work properly. We will die for our country, we will sacrifice ourselves . The country will be free and you will also live in it. Why do you talk this nonsense? I wish I can shoot all of you with shots, but why to kill you, you are already dead? So many troubles were there on the path to freedom."

In February 1945, when our army had besieged Imphal for many days, at that time 14 divisions of British army were there under the command of Gen. Slim. Unfortunately our army had to face difficult time due to non-supply of reinforcement ration, medicines and ammunition in time. Later due to heavy rain our four brigades were ordered to retreat from Imphal and we had to retreat under compulsion. Our soldiers remained hungry and thirsty all the way. Our soldiers suffered a lot from Malaria and Diarrhea. Many of them died on the way back.

The soldiers and the officers who came back from Rangoon narrated all the troubles and difficulties to us. They told me that who had lost their lives on the way had high spirits. Whosoever was breathing his last he used to take out a small tricolor flag and picture of Netaji out of Haver sack and looking at it raised slogans *Bharat Mata ki jai, Netaji ki jai, Azad Hind Fouj Zindabad* and then used to salute the dear Tricolor flag with a smile until his last breath and saying Jai Hind. We were told that those who left for the heavenly abode in front of them, had their last rites performed together and were paid respectful tributes. The departing solders were assured of our efforts to free the country.

Considering the ups and downs of war and the prevalent situation, Netaji had decided to shift the Supreme Command Headquarters from Rangoon to Singapore and none knew about this retreat. On 24th April, 1945, Netaji moved his Supreme Command headquarters from Rangoon to Bangkok. This news had been disclosed the next day after he had left Rangoon. The pamphlets containing the message of Netaji printed on it were dropped from the plane on the camps of INA, markets and the streets of the entire Rangoon. In that message Netaji had his deep thoughts. "My brave freedom fighters, soldiers and officers of INA, Rani Jhansi Regiment and Child Army and dear Indian residents of Rangoon, Burmese Government and all the brothers and sisters in Burma, I salute you, I am forced to shift from Rangoon to Singapore with a heavy heart. My Government has duly given me permission to shift from Rangoon to Singapore. It is common during wars to shift headquarter, base and depots from one place to another. Therefore, I am moving out but that doesn't mean that I am leaving you, I am always with you and will remain with you. Our struggle for freedom has not ended yet. We will continue to fight till our country is free. I am conveying my message with full confidence that our Bharat will be free someday as it is bound to be.

In the end I am thankful to all the brothers and sisters from all over India and Indians living in Burma, Rangoon, Memo, Mandley and Jiyawadi, who have set an example in the history by sacrificing their wealth and property. Finally I must reiterate on behalf of my government that my government was grateful to the friendly Burmese Government which had contributed a lot in establishing our

Supreme Headquarters at Singapore from Rangoon. Burmese Government supported army by providing necessary facilities. Burmese Government's co-operation enabled our army to perform its duties successfully. We will keep Burmese Government as well brothers and sisters of Burma in our hearts. Azad Hind Fauj -Zindabad. Inquilab-Zindabad. Jai Hind.

After receiving this message we were quite restless. But his message also inspired a renewed enthusiasm and courageous calmness. I went to Capt. Amar Singh of Field Propaganda unit of INA, who told me that he considered him unfortunate. The commandant asked me what the matter was . I told him, "Commandant Sir, you know very well that a runner from Netaji Bhawan came to me with a letter that said that I ust report to Netaji at 8 p.m. Accordingly I reported at 7.45 p.m. to the ADC of Netaji. After two minutes a Japanese officer, a colonel came running to me and told that Ram Singh, you cannot meet Netaji now as he was busy. ADC also told so that it was difficult to meet."

I showed him that letter, through which Netaji had ordered me to visit him, then I was assured by the officers that I could visit him the next day, as I had visited them and they would inform Netaji about my visit of the day . At this gesture I could make out that those officers were not aware of Netaji's shifting of headquarters from Rangoon to Bangkok. Had they known it, they would not have denied me from seeing Netaji. Since I was to relay the news and commentary in Gorkhali from Rangoon Radio and there was a programme of some songs of INA, therefore I had to come back. I relayed my programme at Radio station till 10. 30 p.m.

That day I noticed another astonishing incident there.

It was the same Karim Gani Khan who was arrested by Netaji in Rangoon on 16th April, 1945 on administrative grounds standing there in uniform in a corner. His face seemed quite faded. I was amazed to see him in Netaji's Bhawan and I couldn't understand how this arrested person was standing there and that too without any guard. Netaji always said to me, "We will fight to the last drop of blood against the British." Therefore, I thought that it might be that our whole Rangoon Brigade was going to attack the British army, so Netaji had called me there and he might give an important assignment to me. However, I didn't think it proper to talk to Karim Gani Khan and saluted to the ADC and went to Radio Station for my programme . I came to know later on that Netaji took Gani Khan with his convoy. Why he took him with him is best known to Netaji only.

Later on, we were summoned to the headquarters at 10 a.m., where all the officers were present . General Lokanadan instructed us and that our first and foremost duty was to safeguard the life and property of the Indian brothers and sisters and children in Rangoon. There may not be any harm to their honour, and it should never be allowed to happen. As far as the British forces are concerned, at this time the entire Rangoon has been cordoned off by them. The Royal Air Force Airport, the naval ships had been surrounded. Keeping in view the situation, if the British Government tries to make any compromise then we will make an alliance as a foreign Government makes with another foreign Government. According to International laws we will go ahead towards the stage carrying Tricolor flag and a flag of compromise and they will bring the flag of their Government and flag of compromise. Then we will sign the treaty after shaking hands. While considering this proposal by Netaji it seemed to me that the British had to agree to that.

In the first week of May 1945, the British Army occupied Rangoon with full force . Then the government of INA was treated according to international laws and both the governments signed the treaty. We were ordered that every batallion, every department, every office should remain at their places and if a British officer comes there, he should be treated with due respect. And it happened, after two or three days, we were prohibited from moving outside. By getting the Central jail vacated, the ward of Rangoon jail was replaced by INA Central Barrack. The English ordered to gather at 1 p.m. there in the barrack. In the gathering where our highest officer Gen. Lokanadan was present. On 11th May 1945 I was ordered that I must report with my field propaganda unit at INA Centre Barrack.

I feel it necessary to share that in 1944 Netaji had decided to award me a gold medal. He announced this decision in a congregation at Singapore. After I shifted from Singapore to Rangoon, that medal was sent to Rangoon by Singapore headquarters . Netaji wanted that the Gold Medal should have been awarded to me by the Government after a grand parade on an historical day in India. But events didn't favour us and Netaji decided for that parade at Rangoon only.

After my return to Rangoon I prepared Azad Hind Orchestra, in which 35 students and soldiers had joined. Besides this a brass band of Azad Hind Fauj from Nehru Brigade was attached from Maimo, Mandla. Netaji invited that band too on this occasion. The new uniform containing white Gabarteen tunic and pants alongwith barracks was prepared for the whole band and orchestra, There were enthusiastic preparations for this occasion. This happened in the first week of April 1945. As luck would have it I could not reach Bangkok with Netaji that night and could not get the Gold Medal from the pious hands of Netaji and with which I would have proudly decorated my chest.

The situation worsened and the programme had to be cancelled. On first May, Gen. Lokanandan performed the ceremony of presenting that gold medal in the presence of all INA officers. I was awarded that gold medal, which Netaji had mentioned in writing and which was read out while putting that medal round my neck. Netaji wrote," Today we are offering this gold medal to Captain Ram Singh on behalf of Provisional Government and Supreme Command of INA for his meritorious contribution in the field of composing music. Most importantly for his compositions of all the national songs of INA and the National Anthem of INA that was translated from Bangla language to Hindi by the Government. This anthem was sung collectively by 3 million Indians in one rhythm by the INA and Indians inhabited in South Asia. That anthem goes like this:-

Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse Bharat Bhagya Jaga
(Let the rain of happiness and comfort shower as India is awake now)

There is no difference between its tune and the tune of our National Anthem. The tune of the National Anthem of INA was played on 21st October 1943 in the hall of cathay building of Singapore and the 'Quami Tarana' was sung. When our provisional government was formed, it was the first tune of that day. We came to India singng this song. After reaching India I was released from jail on 21st May 1945 and invited to the first meeting of INA Central Relief Committee in Delhi. It was mentioned in telegram: Come with your violin which is given to you by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

In the presence of all the officers of INA I was offered the gold medal in the office of Supreme Commander of INA by our Gen. Lokanandan. The tears of joy and sorrow were rolling down my eyes, it was more so as I could not get the medal from Netaji. But it was a pleasure that medal was decorated on my chest by a great and brave general Lokanandan which I wear in the memory of Netaji.

The day I reached INA Central Barrack at Rangoon Central jail and informed Gen. Lokanadan about my arrival, he immediately sent for me and said, "We are too happy at your arrival. Have you brought your violin with you?" I told, yes I have, it is always with me wherever I go. He said, Ram Singh we also require it here too. Where are all the musical instruments of INA? I will write a letter to the English officials that they should send those instruments with our soldiers. We don't know where we are to move from Andaman and Nicobar, for our self governed country, and martyr ourselves for the country, But wherever we go, we will play our band to sing our National anthem and the song of inspiration, *Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja, Khushi Ke Geet Gaye ja* that will keep our spirits for freedom struggle high and keep our heart and soul refreshed. But the musical instruments were not given back.

On May 13, 1945 our first ship sailed off from Rangoon and halted at Howrah in front of Fort Williams in Calcutta at 10 a.m. on 18th May 1945. There, we were ordered that no soldier will move or shout slogans like Inquilab Zindabad. If anyone violates the orders, he will be shot at sight. We maintained the discipline in true spirits. After sometime, we were taken to Howrah Bridge setil in motors under strict security with our Indian guards armed with brain guns and stain guns. Afterwards, white sergeant police was deputed for our security removing Indian soldiers. After sometime we were boarded in a train and got off at Jigar Gichha Tanzanian camp at 4 p. m. We were provided a space to live there in the camp. Instructions were issued to cook food separately for us keeping in view our unit and community.

We opposed this order and told that we are not communal and that we are being separated on the basis of community.

There was only one community in INA and there was no question of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christians. We considered ourselves only Hindustani (Indians). Then the camp commandant said that he had destroyed the communities. Act upon as you were ordered. But when food was prepared we used to sit together and eat happily sharing with one another as we were taught by our leaders to share lovingly and eat together. English officers and soldiers were astonished at this attitude of love and understanding.

The next day our luggage was thoroughly searched and our wrist watches and photo albums were taken into custody. I had a silver cigarette case that was presented to me by Mr. Theevi, who was the chairman of Indian Independence League in Far East Asia on the occasion of birthday of Netaji in January 1944. There were two gold medals with it. The second gold medal was presented to me as honour by Sardar Ishwar Singh ji in Bangkok when he was the Chairman of Indian Independence League. There was my own violin presented to me by Netaji himself in August 1943 that I used to play at different congregations and celebrations.

Netaji had blessed me with the violin saying "I am presenting you at this time, the National Anthem and National Song of INA will be played on it, the day we form a temporary government and this National Song will touch the land of India while being sung by our enthusiastic soldiers. When India will be free and Tricolor flag will be unfurled at Red Fort, then you will play the National Anthem on this violin and sing with it".

During the Jama-talashi we were deprived of all the articles including my violin, silver Cigarette case and both Gold Medals and these were locked in their store room. I requested the officers that these are my personal articles, but they refused to return. My name was inscribed on both the gold medals along with the name of the person who awarded and the names of places i.e. Singapore and Bangkok. The name of Indian Independence League for East Asia was carved on the silver Cigarette case outside and inside there was my name Captain Ram Singh, Music Director of Azad Hind Fauj and the purpose had also been mentioned for awarding the same.

Next day our Indian officers met us in our camps and told us to forget INA. We will take a brief statement but you people won't mention your volition in joining the INA. We will try our best to send you out of this place so that you may be able to meet your children after a long time. You will be delighted to meet your children, which you could imagine yourself. Those officers tried their best to move us against INA and Azad Hind Government by alluring us. They tried their best to distract our minds with their enticing offers, but how the hearts heaving the image of Netaji could be changed by any amount of allurements!

We narrated one thing in our statement that we had served the British army a few years earlier also, then we had fought for Japanese in East Asia after the surrender of British on 15th February 1942, after British Empire had handed us to Japan, becoming the prisoners of Japan. During our prison life, the wave of freedom of India had risen in East Asia especially in Singapore and it had grown from strength to strength.

On 17th February 1942 Captain Mohan Singh addressed the congregation of around fifty thousand Indian soldiers and officers in British Army, gathered in Farer Park in Singapore. He roared like a lion inviting them to sacrifice themselves for the sake of freedom of our country. He said, today we will jump into the battlefield of freedom as soldiers of freedom struggle breaking the chains of slavery of 200 years old British rule to free our Motherland i.e. India. We will make every kind of sacrifice for our country. As he said this, the slogans Bharat Mata ki Jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru ki Jai, Babu Subhash Chandra Bose ki Jai were raised by those fifty thousand soldiers and officers, resonating the skies.

Seeing such enthusiasm and zeal, fervor Japanese High Authority General, Fujiwada who as representative of Japan came to take over the charge of Indian Army from British rule. When he listened to the lecture of Captain Mohan Singh and understood his thoughtfulness then he didn't feel it appropriate to imprison the Indian army as Japanese prisoners and handed over all the soldiers to the administration of Captain Mohan Singh. At that time Captain Mohan Singh ordered me to sing some songs for these soldiers to boost their morale and to freshen them with music filled them with new current of zeal and zest.

Listening to these songs Farer Park and the buildings of Singapore echoed with the sound of clapping and after that the process of forming INA started. Day and night the meetings started in every camp. High officials organized the units with consultation and gave them the message of joining INA. I formed a core group and used to boost the morale of young soldiers by singing inspirational songs of unity, sacrifice and martyrdom. This process continued with enthusiasm.

In March 1942, Rash Bihari Bose, the great revolutionary of Freedom Struggle came to Singapore. Rash Bihari Bose was the person who threw bomb on Viceroy in revolutionary encounter in freedom struggle and was living underground. He fled from India dodging the British government. After reaching Japan he secretly kept organizing the Indians and revolutionaries living at all places in the East Asia. Then came the much awaited time. Rash Bihari Bose reached Singapore from Tokyo. He took over the charge of Indian Independence League of the East Asia and delivered a message to all army men, officers, and the young soldiers to free India by initiating them as the soldiers of Freedom struggle.

In June 1942, a conference was held under the leadership of Rash Bihari Bose in Bangkok. In it the foundation of INA, appointment of JCO and the brigade of INA was initiated. There Captain Mohan Singh was appointed the first General Commanding, JOC of INA (Indian National Army) and it was announced there. In the beginning four Brigades were established and the first Brigade was named after Mahatma Gandhi as Gandhi Brigade. The second was named after Pandit JawaharLal Nehru as Nehru Brigade, third one after Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad as Azad Brigade and fourth one after Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose name as Subhash Brigade.

In that congregation the representative of Japanese Government Lt. Gen. Fujiwara was also present. In the end Mr. Rash Bihari Bose strongly appealed to the Japanese Government to negotiate with the German Government to bring Netaji, who was in Berlin at that time, back to the East Asia among us . Only then our program can be pursued smoothly. Until he joins us, we will leave no stone for the progress of INA, which has been established today in the name of our motherland and will continue to spread the message of patriotism among the forces.

After bringing us back from Rangoon to India we were kept in prison at different jails of India. In the last week of May I was ordered to go to Multan Cantt camp from Jigar-Guchha camp. I requested the camp commandant that my violin has been kept in your store after being snatched from me. I will be obliged to have it with me to Multan Cantt camp. The day I was deprived of my violin I had worried and gloomy. Acceding to my request the Camp commandant returned my violin. As soon as I got my violin all my worries and sorrows vanished. After that I along with some of companions set off towards Multan Cantt from Jigar-Guchha camp.

After staying in a camp for a week at Multan Cantt, I was taken to the Red Fort at Delhi. As soon as I reached at Red Fort my violin was snatched again and I was imprisoned in a cell. The next day my enquiry started in the office of Red Fort. CID kept enquiring from me. Before the enquiry, the officers had been reporting that I had think against the British rule while serving in INA and I had been propagating against the English by visiting the prisoners' camps of Indian Army. All this record has been reported in our those are lying on the table. Be careful not to try telling a lie when we ask you a question otherwise we will extract the truth by torturing you. I said sir the action I have done in INA and before that serving in Gorkha Indian Army I will tell you in a sequence. Please start writing and you need not ask me anything. Whatever I have done myself I will surely tell you, but if you ask me anything about others I will be helpless and may not be able to tell you anything. Yes, I will tell you surely about those to whom I have been related. Then the narration of my story continued. . . . . .

In custody I was taken to the office at 8 O clock in the morning. My statement was recorded from 8 in the morning to 1. 30 in the afternoon. This process continued for three months. After three months I was shifted from cell to barrack. There were three barracks and INA officials were kept in a mansion in front of them. All the officers and soldiers used to stand before their barracks and sing the national song of INA *Shubh Sukh Chain Ki Barkha Barse, Bharatbhag Hai Jaga* in chorus.

After a few days the British Government decided to prosecute the three generation of INA, General Shahnawaz khan, Col. P. K. Sehgal and Col. Gurbakhash Singh Dhillon. At that time Pandit JawaharLal Nehru travelled across India and made every Indian's heart resonant with the slogan of Jai Hind by Netaji. He appealed all to collect the money to pursue the case to get the officers & soldiers of INA released, who were in custody at different prisons and the also at the Red Fort.

The very first day, when these three brave officers of INA were brought to the Barrack no. 1 at the Red Fort, where the court was established for the trial, the advocates Tej Bahadur Sapru, Bholabhai Desai, K. N. Katju, Sardar Patel, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, these advocates of high rank were there to pursue the case . Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru walked in his gown ten minutes before the commencement of the legal process. As soon as he entered audience created a scene by clapping loudly. Tej Bahadur Sapru had a laugh and said to Bhoolabhai Desai pointing out towards Panditji, "Oh just see Panditji has come wearing the gown of barrister in today's meeting. " Then Nehru ji responded laughingly that he has passed the exam of barrister only for this day. That's why I have worn this gown today and I won't wear it again. The thundering sound of clapping had replaced the silence in the room. When the court process began, there were hot exchanges. The proceedings were published in all the newspapers and people got to know. Panditji handed over the responsibility of the case on the first day to Bhoolabhai Desai, in which Tej Bahadur Sapru, Dr Katju and other prominent lawyers supported Bhoolabhai Desai.

A few months after the closing of case, Bhoolabhai Desai made his last statement after proving all the three brave soldiers innocent, he left for Bombay in the afternoon. The same day the court declared all guilty. I am reminded of that day when these three brave officers were being taken for the hearing of the case, all of us prayed for their lives and welcomed them saying Jai Hind. I will never forget the prediction of General Shah Nawaz Khan. Once going for trial he had said, 'friends with the blessings of Netaji we will go to meet our friends, members of our family and leaders opening the gates of this Red Fort with Tricolor in our hands.'

After a few days these brave officers were ordered to pack their luggage as they had to leave in half an hour, but they were not told where they were to go. After a short while the government vehicle came and they bade us Jai Hind smilingly and left . After an hour of their departure, Subedar Mall Singh of 49 of Gorkha Regiment, who was the in-charge of the guard of our camp, came smilingly and congratulated us. Then he told the details of those three officers that they were directly presented before the court, where the Supreme judge of the British and the government officials of Delhi were present. Court read out the decision in the presence of these three officers. They were taken aback after listening to the decision and there was no visible reaction. Then Chief judge asked them astonishingly if they have understood what he had read out to them. At this all the three spoke simultaneously in grim voice that they could not understand even a word of the judgement. Then the chief judge smiled and said that he would read out once again, decision of government carefully.

The decision reads thus:, 'You people struggled for the freedom of India against the Emperor of British Empire while serving in British army. After considering it minutely the British Emperor of India has ordered to release all of you. Now we will manage for you wherever you want to go. Then there was a smile on their faces. The chief judge got up from his chair, congratulated them and shook hands with them. After that all the officers shook hands with these three high sainik officers of INA. They told that they should be dropped at Dr. S.S. Bhatnagar's place at Barakhambha Road. As soon as they stepped out of the Red Fort, the news of their release spread out like wild fire throughout Delhi. All India Radio, Delhi relayed the news of their release in the evening bulletin.

First of all the President of Congress and other leaders welcomed them by garlanding. The students applied Tilak on their forehead with the blood from their thumbs and performed the Aarti. The earthen lamps were lit in the entire Delhi as it was Diwali festival. First of all they went to Balmiki Ashram to seek blessings of Gandhi ji. After reaching the Ashram they touched his feet. Gandhi ji blessed and asked them to go to their homes first. Their parents and family members must be waiting for them. All the states of India warmly greeted them. After that some other officers and soldiers of INA. were sent to Delhi Cantonement, Kabul Lines. The trial of some of the officers was to be held there. These included Col. Burahuddeen Bahadur Group Azad Hind Fauj, Major Puran Singh, Captain Singh Dhara Singh, Captain Fatte Khan, Col. Abdul Yeend. They were sentenced to seven years of rigorous prison each by the Cantonement court.

Captain Ram Singh is one of the Unsung Heroes of Indian Freedom Movement. His immense, outstanding and memorable contribution towards our Nation has, by and large, remained shelved in the annals of History. The book on the life and works of legendary composer of the tune and music of *jana..gana..mana..* envisages to bring into limelight the relentless journey of a Gorkha Soldier about the real maestro of the musical score of our National Anthem.

This is a humble effort to wipe out the dust from the pages of distorted history which has kept Captain Ram Singh in oblivion from 1943 till date. It is quite surprising that zealots of Tagore continue to give credit to the poet even for the musical score of his poem *jana..gana..mana..* penned by him in 1911 allegedly in the honour of George V. Monarch of England. But the truth is otherwise.

Surely the book will enlighten our countrymen about the deep sense of patriotism instilled in the hearts of millions of Indians prior to Independence by the composition and songs of Ram Singh including *kadam kadam badhaye ja khushi ke geet gaye ja...*

Anamika

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